

## THE EASTER MESSAGE TODAY

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# THE EASTER MESSAGE TODAY

*Three Essays*

*by*

Leonhard Goppelt, 1911-

Helmut Thielicke

*and*

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*translated by*

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*with an Introduction by*

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## FOREWORD

At the end of the Winter semester 1961/62 the Theological Faculty of the University of Hamburg organized a three-day seminar. Its purpose was to discuss the most central theme of all theology—the Easter kerygma—within a frame set beyond the borders of the disciplines, before an audience of university lecturers, assistant instructors, and a specially chosen group of 40 students. The work of the seminar, prepared for in the course of the semester, was preceded each day by a lecture. These three lectures were later published in a revised form. Our wish is that they will lead to further meditation upon this theme, to working out the problems connected with it, and to certainty in regard to its content.

THE AUTHORS

*Hamburg, Easter 1963*

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## Introduction

*by Markus Barth*

### I

Who has ever heard a good Easter sermon? And who among the preachers will boast that he has done a good job in preaching on resurrection? A good sermon on Jesus Christ's resurrection would probably impose itself upon preacher and listeners as a living evidence of the presence, dominion, and joy of Jesus Christ, and it would pierce so gloriously into the darkest corners of man's heart and plight, that without any prodding the affirmation would be made: Yes; so it is; Jesus Christ is risen, indeed! But pray tell me, where do such sermons happen? Many people will remember how hard and sincerely this or that preacher has tried to live up to his commission—and how frustrated have been both, the pulpit and the pew, when the chips were down. Here stood a man who was grimly hiding himself behind Scripture citations and traditional creedal formulations. He seemed not to be worried by any unbelief found in his own heart or among his flock, and his declamations either did not really affect and change anything in his audience, or they troubled and perplexed them so much that they went

away shaking their heads. At the same time, in the church at the opposite corner of Main and State Streets another preacher proved successful in quelling and warming his own and his congregation's heart by a skillful display of his studies in timeless religious symbols and in the mysterious occurrences connected with wishful thinking, visions, and hallucinations. Certainly this man appeared more up to date than his conservative colleague across the street. A considerable number of people will like his enlightened approach to the "symbol of resurrection"; but others wonder all the while whether what they have heard really touched upon the heart of the matter. Somehow they felt that there might be more substance in those ancient stories. They would not deny that their preacher made some quite good points on "meaning"; but they also regretted seeing those Biblical events that had puzzled them for a long time evaporate and disappear in a cloud.—Again, there are sermons which are neither Scylla nor Charybdis. They pass artfully between the gorges to the right and to the left; no accident happens; no one gets excited for or against anything, nothing is changed. Indeed, all too often nothing at all happens in a sermon.

The best Easter sermon that I have heard or read in the United States during the past ten years fitted into none of the above patterns. It was an honest expression of the preacher's complete bafflement by the Resurrection stories and the correlated statements of the New Testament. It was a confession of lack of understanding; it revealed want of appropriation, and failure of communication. It was a cry for help and enlightenment: Here it is said that Thou art risen. But where are you

now? How can we believe? Help our unbelief!—This preacher did more than take the Resurrection seriously. He could not stand up to it; like John of Patmos he just fell down. And that was it. A quest for understanding, a vain hope to grasp it, and precisely this way an impressive recognition of the majesty and mystery of the event of Easter!—No one could or should consider that sermon exemplary and worthy of imitation. But it was a sermon. In its miserable poverty it left room for riches greater than literal exactitude or sophisticated explanation.

Another experience has equally surprised me. People whom I had expected to be the most violent opponents of any serious consideration of the Resurrection, e.g., natural scientists, theological "liberals," and more or less avant-garde college students, have been the only people who again and again ask for a discussion on the Resurrection, and the only ones willing to stick to this one topic for many hours without interruption. More often than not a most passionate protest against cheap belief in legendary tales appears to come nearer the heart of the matter than any well-meant attempt to master and muster the power of the Resurrection for a predetermined purpose.

In regard to the basic issues, the situation among members and non-members of a church is the same in Europe and in America. To meet this situation the three essays contained in the present volume have been composed and translated. This book is designed to be of help to the pastor who in his meditation and in the action of teaching, preaching, and counseling will not bypass the message of the Resurrection. It will also be of interest to those many church members who feel responsible

for the witness given to the church and by the church. This book will finally stimulate thoughtful critics of churchly belief and conduct; they may gain deeper insights into the depths and heights of the facts and the faith they wish to dispute or to disparage.

Three distinguished members of the Theological Faculty of the University of Hamburg, Germany, have convened to treat the same topic under the aspects of their fields of specialization. Of course, this book cannot claim to contain the consensus of a whole theological faculty; but it does present a representative of historical methods of research (L. Goppelt, professor of New Testament), an exponent of reflective and systematic thought (H. Thielicke), and finally a man whose duty it is to teach the application of theology to issues and tasks of contemporary life (H. R. Müller-Schwefe). Nowhere in the whole world can the members of a theological, or any other, faculty be expected to agree on all vital issues related to their labor. German schools are more often than not composed of radically dissenting faculty members. But the three voices heard together in this book form a rather harmonious trio. They will not let go of the Easter event, i.e., of an event that is greater than sheer Easter beliefs or nice Easter stories. These authors hope at least to meet, if not also to dispel many of the grievances which that queer creature called "modern man" may bear in his heart not only against false credulity but even more against so-called supernatural events as such. They do not take refuge in faith assertions without giving a reasonable account of their conviction. They remain open to many things that have been going

on during the recent decades, especially since World War II, in natural science, in language analysis, in psychology, in philosophy, and of course in current discussions among theologians. They do not consider theological research and discussion as an end in itself, but they do hope to render a service to the church and to all thinking men by their labor. They show an equal concern for the details of the Biblical text and for the problems that beset the faith and life of contemporary Christians as well as non-Christians. Thus essential presuppositions are fulfilled for a promising treatment of the issue at hand.

## II

But it may well occur that after a first look American readers will be inclined to shy away from reading a book that contains not a little technical vocabulary. Technical terms may look good to those initiated in the professional language of some great scholars, but it looks like hocus-pocus to the ordinary man. The expressions *Kerygma*, form criticism, hermeneutics, object-subject relationship, demythologizing, certainly have an important sound, but not everyone is able to discuss them. In addition, there are many very brief and cryptic allusions made to nineteenth-century and present-day theological and philosophical disputes; some opinions are extensively refuted, some points that are rather remote from the consciousness and concern of a busy American pastor or layman are minutely argued. Indeed, this little volume contains passages that reflect conti-

national, especially German, discussions rather than problems raised in all congregations of all lands. The slogans used in the European debates are not always self-evident to the outsider. They call for elucidation.

Three aspects of the German theological climate in which these essays originated are to be mentioned above all:

1. When a German theologian speaks of *Kerygma* he may have in mind those units of New Testament verses or chapters which make simple proclamatory statements reporting God's mighty acts, as e.g., the Kingdom is at hand; He has come; He was crucified according to the Scriptures; He was raised. Scholars who have worked hard at distinguishing and interpreting the origin and meaning of the various forms of Biblical diction, have stated that *Kerygma* is in many aspects something opposite to so-called *Didache*, i.e., those other units of the New Testament that contain exhortations, references to specific Scripture passages, or explications. It is characteristic of the *form-critical* school (often mentioned in the three essays) to trace and place in the life of Judaism and of the early congregations the various forms of teaching and preaching that occur in the Bible. *Kerygma* and *Didache*, but also legends and creedal formulas, appear now as most exciting hints and tools for explaining the origin and the growth of faith. Form critics are not asking (as preceding New Testament scholars did) for abstract facts that may lie behind the texts of the Bible. Rather they are searching for oral forms of tradition and for the convictions underlying the Evangelists' and Paul's witness.

Dr. Goppelt's essay is an example of the procedure of the form-critical school; Dr. Thielicke and Dr. Müller-Schwefe do not appear to be equally satisfied with the method and results of that school.

It is important to know that the word *Kerygma* may also contain a much wider meaning than the one just described. The term may denote the act of proclamation or the contents of preaching as it was continued from the beginning of the Church throughout the centuries, up to the present. For those Germans steeped in Reformation theology, preaching is not primarily a reproduction of reflections, a treatment of a freely chosen topic, an expression of good will or a call to conversion and to good works, but it is considered a deed of God in which God himself through the mouth of a servant makes known and conveys salvation. Thus, preaching or *Kerygma* (presupposing that they are what they are destined to be!) is a "power of God for salvation," just as Paul said of his Gospel. The devotion and the energy with which Lutheran, Reformed, and United continental Protestants pursue the problem of preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ, can only be appreciated upon the basis of their respectful attitude to the living and saving *Kerygma* which they expect from the pulpit. This evaluation of preaching may explain why such utilitarian questions as, "What good will it do when I preach the Resurrection?" or such methodological questions as "How to preach more effectively on the Resurrection," are not even mentioned in the three essays. All three authors begin with the assumption that

the Resurrection is and must be preached. Their search becomes a quest for full obedience rather than for means and tricks to make preaching easier or more successful.

2. Since World War II, German University halls as well as large and small studies have been reverberating with discussions about Rudolf Bultmann. Mention any theological topic, mention the Resurrection specifically—and your discussion partner will break out into a confession of why he is for or against Bultmann's utterances on this topic. The Marburg professor has for some become an admired protagonist of Reformation faith, for others a symbol of error and defection from the true faith. Some readers of this book will time and again wonder why on so many pages Bultmann of all people is being made the point of reference? After all, there were theologians before him and there are thinkers in our time who hold views regarding the historicity, the meaning, the existential relevance of Jesus Christ's resurrection that differ little from those of Bultmann. For more than a hundred years it has been loudly proclaimed in academic circles that the form and contents of the Resurrection stories bear a resemblance to mythical tales. Indebtedness to the currently most fashionable philosophy and its specific language is not a privilege of Bultmann; philosophical tenets and allegedly objective results of purely historical research have long before Bultmann formed a powerful alliance. Finally, Pietists and Methodists have long before Bultmann made personal experience, or a change in self-consciousness, the touchstone of the validity of saving events and of faith. But several features of Bultmann's thought and work

have lifted him above like-minded fellow travelers on his road, and have made it necessary that his rather than their views be apostrophized again and again.

Bultmann has succeeded in uniting traditional elements of higher criticism of the Resurrection stories with the pathos of "modern man." He has been bold enough to affirm that a man must be schizophrenic to believe that he can use the telephone and modern clinical equipment while at the same time believing in the resuscitation of a human corpse. He announces that he stands solidly upon the ground of Luther's *sola fide*, and wishes to do nothing else but to free faith from all pseudo-hindrances and pseudo-crutches. According to him, true faith in God need not be encumbered by belief in a revived body; the verification of the tomb's emptiness and of Christ's bodily appearance is impossible at any rate. But even if it were feasible, it would by no means constitute a presupposition or help to make a decision of faith that involves man's whole existence; it would only increase the number of matters that man accepts as true. Bultmann does not wish simply to remove the Resurrection, or the faith connected with Easter. Rather he understands it as a divine act by which was given to the disciples true understanding of the meaning of the cross, even the gift of forgiveness and of authentic existence. To put it more briefly, for Bultmann the Easter event is the birth of faith in the disciples. Preaching the Resurrection means, consequently, not to deliver a speech about objective facts, but to extend a call to faith as it was granted the disciples. The whole process of such interpretation and application has been called,

by Bultmann himself, *demythologization*; for it is supposed to remove from the Bible reader's mind the obstacles presented by the mythical form of the Resurrection stories, and to make him ready to reach the hidden purpose and goal of all mythological talk, that is, to make an existential decision for or against faith.

By their untiring references to Bultmann and his followers, the authors of this book reveal their engagement in a maelstrom of contemporary German discussion. The readers will soon realize that the three authors agree in disagreeing with Bultmann, but that each one of them has his own manner of argumentation and offers his own alternatives.

Now, in America and in Britain, books have appeared during the past few years (as S. N. Ogden's *Christ without Myth*, and Bishop J. A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God*) that signal a radicalization of the discussion. Bultmann's most extreme theses look tame and inconsistent enough when they are compared with some of his followers' adventures. For now, not only some accounts such as those of the miracles and Resurrection but God and Christ themselves are being subjected to demythologization. Still, this most recent development is not yet focused upon in these three essays. It may well be that the authors resist the temptations of Bultmann's way because they sense that at its end a stance would be taken that resembles atheism more than anything else. The authors do not pretend to possess the means to convince an atheist of Christ's resurrection.

3. Characteristic of the latest German trend in post-Bultmannian discussion is the radical turn to the problem of

*hermeneutics* and the ventilating of this problem in its philosophical, linguistic, and existential dimensions. The cryptic term hermeneutics is derived from the office of the god Hermes who, as the messenger boy of the heavenly gods, had to communicate and interpret their will to the mortals. Hermeneutics in the narrower sense is the science of interpreting the Scriptures or any given text; in the wider sense it is the philosophical elaboration of the basis, the vital elements, the sum-total, and the application of the principles ruling the understanding, communication, and exposition of an event, an idea, a manifestation, a document, or of language as such. Thus the meaning of hermeneutics may approach the sense of epistemology, i.e., of the scientific elaboration on the problem of knowing.

Among German theologians (as F. Gogarten; E. Fuchs; G. Ebeling) the discussion has recently converged upon the relationship of *subject and object* in the process of knowledge and in the act of historical existence. The sharp distinction between fact and human perception, or between objective things and the language describing them, was submitted to radical criticism. It is being held that the object-subject distinction can and must be overcome. When this axiom is applied to the Biblical references to Jesus Christ's resurrection, then the claim appears ridiculous that there must stand (and can be found) a Resurrection fact behind the Resurrection faith and behind the Resurrection message. The event, the language referring to it, and the faith in it are inseparable. The charge made against Bultmann (e.g., by H. Thielicke) saying that he reduces the Resurrection event to a mere change

of the subjective consciousness of the disciples appears then as an absurdity; for the objective and the subjective can no longer be played out against one another. Rather the event of Christ's resurrection may now be boldly identified with the crucified Christ's becoming the contents of preaching and of faith. This Resurrection is now the conveyance of power to lead a new life. Who would call such an event either objective or subjective if obviously both elements are happily united in it? Some call the heart of this event the miracle of language, the *Sprachereignis*.

Since American readers are prone to prefer the treatment of practical matters to that of philosophical propositions, they may feel not a little embarrassed whenever the essays here printed refer to the discussion of hermeneutical principles. But soon enough they may observe, with some satisfaction, that the authors stand at the side of those who do not believe in a philosophical patent solution. The authors do not seek for and they do not attempt to present a philosophical principle that, like *Deus ex machina*, can simply and infallibly be applied to the Resurrection texts and other grave problems in order to guarantee adequate understanding and faithful preaching.

So much about the predominantly German background and the technical vocabulary of the present treatment of the Resurrection topic.

### III

The main bulk of matters treated in this book is of common concern to all Western theologians, whether they live on this

or that side of the Atlantic. We will enumerate only a few of the problems that beset all those willing to be engaged in a careful reflection and meditation of the Resurrection. There are some real and there are some fictitious tensions between a historically verifiable incident and a statement of faith; between Kierkegaard's passionate emphasis upon the experience of truth in subjective terms and a sacramentalist understanding of the essence of encounter, actualization, and participation; between expert theologians and humble preachers; between a call to faith and later fruits of the Spirit. Anyone willing to understand even the slightest element of the Resurrection will run into the dilemma of multiple choices like those just mentioned. Does he have to make a choice? Or are there complementary solutions available that are not too different from the procedures of modern physicists? This book will help to find a way on which the issues are boldly faced and cheap answers avoided.

Beside the problems typical of twentieth-century Western man stand questions that at all times and in all places have bothered hearers and readers of the Biblical accounts of the Resurrection. For a long time it seemed that a harmonization of the accounts would yield a true picture; but it is possible that by cheap harmonization more is lost than gained. It is obvious that legendary features are not absent from the Resurrection stories; but the criteria used to fix the demarcation between history and legend, or between report and interpretation, remain debatable and will, perhaps, never be agreed upon. Since Jesus Christ's resurrection points so unmistakably into

the realm of the Spiritual, only a spiritual interpretation appears to fit this event. All the more, the fact is startling and cannot be removed that Luke and John put the greatest possible emphasis upon the bodilyness of Him who appeared outside the tomb and in Galilee. The risen Christ calls most distinctly for faith and preaching; but the institution of baptism and the assembly to a solemn meal are also connected with His resurrection. Not only knowledge, insight, certainty, and obedience, but also the beginning of a new life, or of "new being" as some call it, is dependent upon the Resurrection. The risen Christ appears to but a handful of men and women; yet a cosmic relevance, extending to all men, all ages, and all creatures, is ascribed to His resurrection. There is much emphasis upon the faith of the disciples, i.e., upon the new relationship between Him and them as it was established by the Resurrection; but there are also important pointers to the faithfulness that God manifested toward His Son. So the Resurrection appears not only as a deed done by the Triune God, but also as an event within the Trinity. This event is depicted at the same time as an infinite surprise or shock, and as a fulfillment of a sequence of words and events that had to find this culmination. Again, the Resurrection is not only an end but also the beginning of a new era, the starting point of the Gospel's run through the world and the Church's gathering around and witness to it.

In the three essays sometimes tentative, sometimes daring answers are given to many of the contemporary and the perennial questions that are asked or may be asked by both those who would believe and those who do not. We have said before

that final results or pat answers should not be expected. Much is gained if only decisive questions are raised and if the reader becomes engaged in the attempt to face them and to respond to them. May he realize that the questions we like to direct to the Easter event and to the witnesses and texts referring to it are secondary in nature; much more important than the question we ask are those questions we *are* asked! We need to behave responsively! Especially in H. Thielicke's and H. R. Müller-Schwefe's lectures it becomes obvious that the writers have become engaged, somehow like the Emmaus disciples, in a vivid conversation with the subject Jesus Christ, of whom they speak. They attempt to draw others into the same conversation. L. Goppelt seems to begin with the attitude of a historian who maintains a cool detachment essential to his work. But even he concludes with the statement that the Resurrection is a "work of redemption [that] reaches and includes us." Each of the three writers takes the historical problems most seriously, and each is so captivated by the specific subject matter that he makes most personal confessions.

## IV

Since each part of this book follows a clearly distinguishable structure, there is no need to give a summary of the contents. But allusions may be given to some highlights that may be anticipated by those who make their way through the negative and positive, the historicizing and the confessional, the more technical and the more inspirational paragraphs. L. Gop-

pelt explains that the Resurrection stands in closest connection with the earthly ministry of Christ. "The Easter appearances . . . terminated the self-offering of Jesus to His disciples in the earthly days . . . They have forsaken Him. He offers Himself anew to them for the formation of the new community."

H. Thielicke wishes to avoid the pitfalls of the term "objectivity" because he holds that it is too often understood to mean objectifiability, i.e., verifiability with the tools of a historian. He suggests "trans-subjectivity" as a more fitting substitute. Still, with historical research as such he has much sympathy. He feels that the best use to be made of historical criticism lies in "anti-criticism," i.e., in a criticism showing that "exactly determinable facts may not contradict Easter faith." Precisely sharp historical research shows the historian his limits. Anti-criticism will acknowledge the ambiguity of the Easter appearances and visions, and it will "demolish the illegitimate unambiguity which a secular historian will ascribe to his . . . thesis." It may be remembered that Richard Niebuhr's book on *Resurrection and Historical Reason* followed a similar line of argument. Finally, Thielicke wants to explain why the Resurrection is not just a noetic, but also an ontic event, i.e., why it is not only a commentary on the cross, but a break of continuity, a shock, a new light. The resurrected Christ stands at the other side of a chasm to which prophecy points. The burning heart of man has at best a faint notion of what is beyond. "I would not be drawn over the chasm if He (Jesus Christ) were not really there."

H. R. Müller-Schwefe's specific interest lies in the refutation of the more or less subtle rationalizations and spiritualizations of the Resurrection. "Man is body . . . The miracle of Revelation lies in the descent of God into our human life: into mortal corporeality . . . The Resurrection . . . is the sign of God that this corporeality has a future." Faith does for this reason not abrogate man's bodily existence; Thomas is encouraged and entitled to touch, to see, and thus to believe. The Resurrection is the signal of new creation which embraces total man. Faith in the presence of the Resurrected One in the Sacraments is "perhaps" the touchstone for faith in the presence of Jesus Christ in the preached word. At all events, preaching on the Resurrection is not dependent upon a rational explication. For "Resurrection surpasses our understanding . . . It aims to be preached, whether or not the community and its theology understand much or little about it . . . The message constantly overflows the interpretation."

These hints should suffice to whet the reader's appetite for the following threefold treatment of the Resurrection.

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Pittsburgh Theological Seminary  
Pittsburgh, November 5, 1963

## The Easter Kerygma in the New Testament

*by Leonhard Goppelt*

The query concerning the Easter Kerygma is the key question of Christian theology and of the ultimate fulfillment of Christian life. In a Christian sense faith, according to Paul, means that we believe "in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord" (Rom 4.24). "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile" (1 Cor 15.17). Nevertheless, for none of us is it self-evident that this message is really true!

Rather than hindering us, the central importance of our query should bolster our efforts to clarify the question with intellectual honesty. Here this clarification will be undertaken on the basis of New Testament research. We shall now conduct an inquiry into the Easter kerygma in historical-exegetical terms. This does not mean that we shall withdraw from the present-day argumentation of the modern world concerning the Easter faith and interpretation of history—a concern that belongs to systematic theology—and lose ourselves in the distant world of the New Testament. For behind the judgments of the historical-exegetical discussion of the New Testament

Easter texts stands the theological-philosophical argumentation of the present day in the form of actual hermeneutic principles. The exegetical discussion of historical scriptural research is precisely the place at which the conflict between the spirit of our age and the Biblical message finds its most intense expression. It is also the place where it becomes immediately apparent to what extent the actual theological-philosophical principles do justice to the Biblical message. Historical Scriptural research arose in the eighteenth century, as did also the spirit of modern times ushered in by the Enlightenment. Today all serious Scriptural research, including that carried on in the Catholic Church, is aware of its commitment, theologically, to the historical-philosophical method. Today we are inescapably aware of the historical character of the books of the Bible. Hence the theological problems of modern thought become acute precisely when an inquiry is made into the form and significance of the New Testament Easter kerygma in terms of an historical-exegetical approach.<sup>1</sup>

This becomes at once apparent when, by way of an introduction, we present the two historical-theological explanations of the Easter kerygma which have arisen in modern German Protestant theology. Our discussion, for the most part, will use as its point of departure, these two explanations.

*Introduction: The historicist and existentialist explanations of the Easter kerygma.*

1. Around 1900 an extreme branch of historical Scriptural

research developed an explanation of the Easter kerygma which cut itself off from everything which up to then was considered Christian theology. It is expressed in the following remarks of the well-known exegete, Johann Weiss. In 1909 Weiss took a conclusive stand with respect to the problem of Jesus and Paul, over which at that time a passionate controversy raged: "For Paul, too, Christianity is a 'Christ-religion,' i.e., at its center stands the inner religious relationship to the exalted Christ. Throughout the millennia this form of religion has been regarded as authentic Christianity, and today there are still countless Christians who know and desire no other form of the faith. . . . Alongside it [today] there is a religious tendency which is no longer able to find a religious relationship to the exalted Christ and is fully satisfied to let itself be led to the Father by Jesus of Nazareth. Both forms of religious life coexist in our Church. . . . I make no secret of the fact that, along with the majority of modern theologians, I profess the second view and that I hope it will gradually come to prevail in our Church."<sup>2</sup> This interpretation of the Christian faith is in keeping with the historical explanation of the Easter event which Johann Weiss, in his *GESCHICHTE DES URCHRISTENTUMS*<sup>3</sup> depicts as the average opinion of a broad stream of Protestant research of that time: the Easter appearances are not "as it seemed to them [disciples] the cause, but an effect of their faith!" The account of the empty tomb was composed later, as an addendum, because they were able to imagine a resurrection only as a rising up from the grave. According to Wilhelm Bousset's fascinating exposition, the development of

the Easter message in the Christology of the New Testament, like the message itself, is exclusively the time-bound form in which the impact of the religious personality of Jesus was invested with symbolic expression.<sup>4</sup> Around 1910 the exponents of liberal theology and the so-called religious-historical school met on common ground in this approach to the explanation of the Easter kerygma. It is important to note that behind this explanation there stands an elaborated hermeneutic principle, namely, the principle of historicism, which is independent of theological considerations; this principle holds that history is to be explained as an unbroken, immanent, causal-interconnection, just as nature itself at that time was being explicated by the natural sciences. Liberal theology was of the opinion that it had to recognize this principle as *a priori* scientifically validated and remove the religious element from the spheres of history and nature. Thus it would have to be thrust back into man's inwardness.

2. In a dialectical antithesis to this explanation Rudolf Bultmann, himself a product of this school of thought, developed his scheme on the basis of the philosophical and theological turn that set in after 1918. We shall now summarize its distinctive features as the second explanation in connection with our introduction. Its hermeneutic principle takes its point of departure especially from Heidegger's *existenz* philosophy. Nevertheless, a part of it, dialectically, is extensively linked to historicism. First of all, Bultmann analyzes the texts largely according to the historical method. In his opinion, however, nothing is actually understood on the basis of this analysis.

For example, nothing is understood of the structure in the Easter texts, of conjectural events, of legends and mythical interpretations, especially if we reconstruct the historical events with the aim of making them objective, unless of course we interpret the accounts existentially at all their levels. This interpretation is, in general, regarded as independent of theology, but Bultmann stresses that it corresponds to it. He acquired the premise of his theology mostly under the influence of Karl Barth. He sees that the New Testament is concerned not with religion but with the Word of God, and with faith.<sup>5</sup>

On the basis of these principles Bultmann explains the rise of the Easter kerygma as follows: Jesus was not "a religious personality" who kindled religion, but the last call of God. As such he demands a decision concerning faith. "The decision which Jesus' disciples had once made to affirm and accept his sending by 'following' him, had to be made anew and radically in consequence of His crucifixion. . . . The church had to surmount the scandal of the cross and did it in the Easter faith. How this act of decision took place in detail, how the Easter faith arose in the individual disciples, has been obscured in the tradition by legend and is not of basic importance."<sup>6</sup> This decision concerning faith is expressed in the Easter kerygma, which afterwards, in a constant reciprocal action, engendered further decision concerning faith and further proclamation, thus becoming a spiritual tradition. Accordingly, "Belief in the resurrection and faith that Christ himself, yes God himself, speaks in the proclaimed word (2 Cor 5.20) are identical."<sup>7</sup>

During the controversy over demythologization this expla-

nation of the Easter kerygma gave rise to the question: "Is the living resurrected Lord Himself, or only the kerygma, a reality for Bultmann?"<sup>8</sup> Bultmann replied to this question in the lecture he delivered at Heidelberg in 1960, which summarized the legacy of his Biblical research:<sup>9</sup> "Frequently, and mostly as criticism, it is said that according to my interpretation of the kerygma, Jesus supposedly has risen in the kerygma. I accept this statement. It is fully correct, provided that it is rightly understood. It signifies that Jesus is really present in the kerygma, that it is His Word which the listener encounters in the kerygma." Again we must ask: Is He therefore present only in such a way that it is only "His Word"? What does "His Word" mean? Faith in the New Testament sense is informed about the person of Jesus behind the Word and appeals to Him in prayer. On the basis of his hermeneutics Bultmann cannot discuss the reality of the exalted Lord. He does not dispute it, but simply passes it over in silence! Thus, what may not remain open, according to the New Testament, remains open. The call to faith, then, becomes a legal injunction if the living Lord vanishes behind the kerygma.

For the past five years many of Bultmann's pupils in the field of research have become aware of this *aporie*. They are now making efforts to fill out the kerygma through a retroactive inquiry into the person of the earthly Jesus. This has led to a split in the Bultmann school which is ever more clearly marked today.

Some, especially Günther Bornkamm,<sup>10</sup> now stress that the Easter faith was founded by a new Revelation made to the

disciples. The utterances concerning the Resurrection, however, remain weak because Jesus is viewed only as the instrument of God's work of redemption and not as the Promised One in person. Another branch of the school, represented by Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling, disavows this retroactive inquiry into the earthly Jesus on the basis of Bultmann's principle that the Easter kerygma is supposedly the point of departure of the New Testament faith and proclamation. It goes back rather to a founding of the faith by the earthly Jesus. Thus Ernst Fuchs now writes: "Would it not be more correct also to demythologize the so-called 'Easter-faith'? . . . or how, for instance, is that Easter faith to be distinguished from the faith in the forgiveness of sins, as it is expressed in the parable of the prodigal son?"<sup>11</sup>

We must content ourselves here with these necessarily schematic references. If one now follows the efforts of the research, stemming from Bultmann's impulse, which revolves around our problem, one gets on the whole the impression that although exegetical work everywhere pushes beyond the hermeneutic principle, in the meantime it still remains its prisoner.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, this hermeneutic principle is the dialectical antithesis between historical analysis and existentialist interpretations; it has above all a threefold significance: (1) The historical analysis of the New Testament texts is conducted "purely historically," with, moreover, the latent intention of removing every historical support from faith through a radical criticism. The result of the analysis appears as a theologically inviolable "scientific" datum! (2) The mean-

ing-content of the text is acquired through the existentialist interpretation of this result. (3) Only after passing through this double filter, as it were, does the content of the text become a call to faith. This procedure corresponds to the concept of faith. Faith is only the decision on faith over against a call transmitting self-understanding. It flees from history into the historicity of existence. In a positively magical way the kerygma becomes an exclusive event of redemption and the content of faith is entirely dissolved in the act of faith in a positively mystical way. Gerhard Ebeling, for example, can assert: "The appearance of Jesus (in the Easter appearances) and the coming to the faith of those who were made to witness the appearances was therefore one and the same!"<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, the content of the New Testament commits us to an exegesis which (1) is carried out in a permanent critical dialogue between historical analysis and the understanding of faith arising from the Church's proclamation thereof. This dialogue will disclose that many purely historical judgments are based upon simple philosophical prejudices and upon plain misunderstanding. (2) It has become increasingly clearer in the last years that the existentialist interpretation does not do justice either to the nature of history or to that of faith, but diminishes both in an intolerable way. The content of the New Testament commits us to refrain from turning the existentialist interpretation, or any other hermeneutic principle or dogma, into a static presupposition of exegesis. Such static presuppositions signify a new "Babylonian captivity" of the Gospel. We must also juxtapose the modern

modes of thinking and ecclesiastical tradition to the critical dialogue with the claim of the text which is derived from a knowledge of the faith. In following this premise, which cannot be more accurately elucidated here, our purpose shall be to develop the form and significance of the Easter kerygma now at hand from four questions, and thus clarify the nature of the New Testament faith in terms of its central content.<sup>14</sup>

### I. *How does the Easter kerygma read?*

1. *The oldest form of the Easter kerygma* accessible to us is doubtlessly to be sought in the Christological creedal traditions of the pre-Pauline period. These can be discovered through an historical analysis of forms in the Pauline epistles and in the Acts of the Apostles. In these writings an indefinable but not inconsiderable number of concepts on the ministry and dignity of Jesus (which have been inserted in the text without an express citation through stylistic and semantic features) contrasts sharply with the well-known verses in 1 Cor 15.3-5, which are expressly designated as the traditional form.<sup>15</sup> The oldest Easter kerygma is not to be sought in the verses which assert the dignity of the exalted Lord on the ground of His ministry (e.g., Acts 2.36; Rom 1.3f), but in the conceptual forms concerning the ministry of Jesus. Among these, many exegetes<sup>16</sup> hold the shortest form, which merely expresses the fact, to be the oldest. For example, Rom 10.9, ". . . God raised him [Jesus] from the dead," and the more detailed form, e.g., 1 Cor 15.3-5, are

held to be later theological elaborations. But this viewpoint of development is too formal. We must consider the "seat in life." Then it will be shown that these brief forms are fundamentally confessional creeds which respond to the proclamation such as that in Rom 10.9.

The forms expressing merely the fact were unusable as proclamation; for how could a Jewish person admit this mere assertion into his faith? As soon as we make an inquiry into forms which purpose to be clear proclamation, two traditions stand out conspicuously among the legacy of forms. We find one in Peter's sermons in Acts 2.5. At their base lies an outline of the missionary proclamation under Israel which proves the alien peculiarities in Luke to be genuine tradition. The age of this tradition is to be inferred from a surprising observation. This outline, in essential passages, coincides especially with a second tradition, the form in 1 Cor 15.3-5. This form is derived, as has been almost generally seen in the meantime (Vs 3-5), from the Palestinian early Church, i.e., from Jerusalem. In all probability Paul took it over as a binding tradition (1 Cor 15.3a: *παρέλαβον*) either at the time of his conversion or at the time of his first visit to the original community, hence at the latest five years after the death and the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, the passages in which these two form-traditions agree constitute the elements of the oldest Easter kerygma.

2. Thus the oldest Easter kerygma *contained the following three elements*: First, an antithetical statement on the ministry of Jesus. In the outline of Peter's preachments (Acts 2.23-24;

3.15; 4.10; 5.30) it reads: ". . . you . . . killed Jesus. But God has raised Him up." And in 1 Cor 15.3f: ". . . Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, [and] he was buried, [and] he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and . . . he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."

This assertion is linked to the next two elements, namely, the reference to the fulfillment of Scripture and the reference to the witnesses to the Easter appearances.

3. If this, according to all probability, was the oldest fundamental content of the Easter kerygma, two far-reaching conclusions result regarding the *mode of expression*. For then, in accordance with its origin, the Easter kerygma was not the profession of a previously existent Easter faith. Rather, it was but an interpreting attestation to an occurrence. Obviously, the Easter appearances were attested to in faith and interpreted as evidence of the resurrection. Thus the Easter kerygma finds its closest parallel in the original creed of the Old Testament recorded in Deut 26.5–11.<sup>18</sup> Like the latter, it simply seeks to attest to "the great deeds of God" in faith. This attestation, however, is never put forth as a chronicle-like account but rather as a statement proclaiming a deed of God. Therefore this content is already present in a markedly different formulation in the Petrine sermons as well as in 1 Cor 15.

4. Wherein lies the difference? *Both formulations* refer in a different way to the ministry of Jesus before the resurrection. The Petrine sermons expressly refer to His earthly activity. On the other hand, 1 Cor 15 makes no mention of earthly

activity but talks about the redemptive significance of Jesus' death, which conversely, and strikingly, is not mentioned in Peter's preaching. This difference is explainable in the first place on the basis of a different kerygmatic orientation. The outline of the Petrine sermons is a missionary appeal to atonement addressed to Jesus' contemporaries. They can be charged only with their attitude toward the God-man Jesus. Matthew (11.20-24) also is the only Gospel to mention Jesus' dire warnings to the Galilean towns, for publicly Jesus had raised no Messianic claim. Accordingly, 1 Cor 15.3-5 is a catechistic summary of the Easter kerygma for the community, which in turn makes it its own in the collective style of the confession. The community is addressed as if Jesus' death had occurred for its sake.

It is not surprising that from the beginning the Easter kerygma emerged in an inwardly and outwardly directed formulation. Both these aspects were already at work in the earthly activity of Jesus simply because they were posited by the circumstance itself: the mystery "of the kingdom of God" (Mk 4.11), namely, its presence in the activity of Jesus, and the mystery of His dignity as well as of His departure from the world, is revealed only to His followers (cf. Mk 8.30f). For this mystery reveals itself only to faith.<sup>19</sup> Hence it is not astonishing that after Jesus' departure both aspects emerged again, albeit modified, in the elaboration of the Easter kerygma as well as in its development in the Mark and Q traditions. For an analysis based on historicist objectivizing the two forms of the Easter kerygma diverge from each other, just as do

both aspects of Jesus' earthly activity. For example, the proclamation of parousia and the sufferings to befall the Son of Man are both roots of the synoptic tradition. For an analysis based on theological understanding they essentially belong together as a missionizing and teaching kerygma.

We arrive at the following conclusion: on the basis of content the Easter attestation was kerygmatically oriented. Therefore, from the beginning onwards, it was always depicted in a kerygmatic interpretation. Its kerygmatic interpretation, however, led to a development which made the Easter kerygma the root of the whole original Christian proclamation. The upshot of this is to be found in the New Testament. The significance and importance of the Easter kerygma first discloses itself to us only if we cast a prior glance at the impulses which this now engendered. Hence we ask:

## *II. How was the Easter kerygma developed by the kerygmatic interpretation?*

That the Easter kerygma is the root of the whole original Christian proclamation has already been often stated and should no longer be disputed. But just how this actually happened is unclear even up to the present day.

In my opinion we must distinguish *two schools* in which the Easter kerygma was interpreted and developed. It was at one time developed in reference to Jesus' earthly activity and then with reference to the Church in the making.

The first school demonstrated the following: the mission-

izing Easter kerygma asserts: "You have killed Jesus, although God confirmed Him . . ." This charge had to be made clear in terms of Jesus' earthly activity. The elucidation in Acts 10.37-41 was already contained *in nuce* within the frame of Mark's account. For example, an old group of materials, the controversial conversations in 2.1-3, 6, allows us to recognize that even the material of the Mark tradition, or at least a part of it, was to a great extent assembled under this view, which as regards the present structure of the Gospel surprisingly concludes with the decree of death. Hence this collection purposes to explain why Jesus was condemned. A far-reaching conclusion results from this observation: in its beginning the Gospel tradition is not, as the classical form-history assured, a paradigmatic illustration of the sermons to the community, but an exposition of the earthly ministry developed in terms of the Easter kerygma pointing to the Cross. The tradition of the Gospels really aims, first of all, to report an event that has happened on the Cross which does not usually happen in this way in the community! It tells the community who the Resurrected One is. Even the synoptic Gospels allude only very reservedly to what the individual occurrences of the earthly days—(for example, individual miracles and parables)—say to the community in the post-Easter situation. This was first developed very clearly by the Johannine Gospel, for example, in John 6.

What the exalted Lord has to say to the community, the preaching to the community, as we find it in the New Testament epistolary literature, springs essentially from the devel-

opment of the Easter kerygma in the other school, namely, its *Christological interpretation*. From the beginning the Palestinian primitive Church developed the Easter kerygma in a twofold way. The awakening of Jesus is at one time interpreted as His exaltation to Christ, i.e., to the heavenly Messianic ruler (Acts 2.36; 13.33; Rom 1.3f). At the same time it is said: Jesus has been raised up to heaven by the Resurrection, and as Christ He will bring fulfillment in the near future; Acts 3.19f; 1 Cor 16.22. *Maranatha!*

Again it is important to inquire *how* this interpretation came into being. The classical analysis of New Testament Christology by the religious-historical school, for example, Bousset's book, *Kyrios Christus*, declared that early Christian theology transferred to Jesus already available conceptions of the Jewish Apocalyptic. Certainly, the Apocalyptic of early Christianity up to Paul found many notions and conceptions already at hand. For example, they found the conception of resurrection, but not the central concept, the significance of resurrection, and as well the twofold Christological interpretation resulting from it. The historicist's conceptual scheme, which views Christology as arising from the transfer of already existent conceptions to Jesus, has now been proven to be an ahistorical postulate because of the progress of religious-historical research. For example, it is shown that the conception of the Son of Man (*aeth Hen*), probably,<sup>20</sup> and the image of the gnostic Redeemer, most certainly,<sup>21</sup> were not pre-existent in the setting of primitive Christianity. For this reason therefore we now view the rise of early Christian Christology in a more differentiated way.

Jewish theology furnished several conceptual beginnings and means of expression for the Christological interpretation of the Easter kerygma. No doubt it did this less through its Messianic theology than, for example, through its martyr theology.

Furthermore, the Christological interpretation of the Easter kerygma arose through an independent theological effort. This was done above all by way of that which the kerygma itself proclaims, namely, "according to Scriptures!" The phrase "according to Scriptures" does not mean a rational Scriptural proof, such as the apologist Justin undertook in the second century, but the attempt to understand Jesus' ministry meditatively on the basis of Scripture, i.e., the Old Testament. Jesus Himself had taught this way of understanding His ministry. The teacher of Nazareth and His disciples had evaluated Scripture no less independently than the Qumran Teacher of Righteousness! This meditation, rooted in Scriptural learning, was the native soil of Christian theology, not the Apocalyptic, as is again asserted today! It was accomplished in the thought patterns of that time in close relation to the exegetical traditions of the environment. Because of this time-bound form, the references in the New Testament to the Old in the new exegesis were in the main discarded as being meaningless to us. Hence it is perhaps the most notable theological event of our generation that there now exists an *Old Testament* science, linked especially with the name of Gerhard von Rad, which fundamentally views the New Testament Scriptural interpretation of the matter as legitimate. The fact that this has been almost disregarded up to now is a fateful shortcoming; hence

the central factor in the interpretation of the appearance of Jesus remains removed from the field of vision. How the two-fold Christological interpretation arose as a result of the co-operative combination of these two factors will become conceptually clear when we proceed now to analyze the root from which all this emerged. Thus we shall pose our third question.

### III. *The origin and meaning of the utterance: He is risen*

1. Let us first ask: what could the *Jewish setting* contribute to this utterance? If we hear the utterance "He is risen" with the ears of those who lived in that environment, it then contains a wholly unique, totally unheard of assertion. Already in non-Biblical Greek the words (*ἀνίσπημ, ἐγείρω, ἀνάστασις*) employed here in the New Testament in reference to deceased persons, signify the return to a corporeal existence. For example, they refer to the resuscitation of one who has just died, but not to the survival of the soul. In the setting of the first community these words, or their Hebraic-Aramaic correspondences, precisely used, designated resurrection to eternal life in a new world.<sup>22</sup> The Jewish Apocalyptic, beginning with the apocalypse in Is 24-27 (25.8; 26.19) and in Dan 12.2, developed this conception. In the days of Jesus it had become a binding doctrine of Pharisaical rabbinism. But no one referred to a deceased person as having risen! Resurrection, a new corporeal existence, was awaited only with the appearance of the future new world.<sup>23</sup> When the disciples speak of the Resurrection of Jesus, they are stating that the Resurrection is the

ultimate eschatological event. This is its sense when Paul combines the Resurrection with the eschatological rising from the dead and designates the Resurrected One as the first fruit of the new world (1 Cor 15.20-26). Thus the Easter kerygma is an utterance remote from the Greek conceptual world. But it was a unique and unprecedented statement in the mental world of the Jews as well.

How did the disciples arrive at this conception? They could not have inferred this from Jewish conceptions. Actually, as the kerygma asserts, they could only testify to their experience. What did they experience? They themselves did not observe the Resurrection. This is proper since the Resurrection is not, like the resuscitation of Lazarus, a return to this life, but an eschatological event, the appearance of the new world of God. When the apocryphal Petrine Gospel has the guards observe the rising from the tomb, this contradicts the nature of the event. Only in Matthew is a small step in this direction found in the New Testament. In the course of the account of the watch over the grave it is peculiar to Matthew that the opening of the tomb is observed (Mt 28.2-4). According to the Easter kerygma the Resurrection is not observed but attested to on the ground of the Easter appearances.

2. The Easter kerygma does not base itself—this must be briefly maintained here—on the *finding of the empty tomb*, neither in 1 Cor 15 nor in Peter's sermons in the Acts. This silence is not grounded on historical tradition, but upon fact. The accounts concerning the finding of the empty tomb are, as Wolfgang Nauck<sup>24</sup> demonstrated, very old and reliable tra-

ditions. But according to the oldest form of the report itself the empty tomb supposedly refers to the Easter appearances, and is not an independent attestation to the Resurrection. It is interpreted in this sense by the words of the Angel in Mk 16.6f: "You seek Jesus of Nazareth . . . he is not here . . . tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." The finding of the empty tomb is an ambiguous sign which prepares the Easter appearances beforehand and which is first interpreted through them. The Easter kerygma presupposes also that "he was buried," in 1 Cor 15.4, but it does not base itself on this sign but on the event.

3. How does the utterance, "He is risen," result from the Easter appearances?

The *Kerygma* designates the content of the appearances with the term *ωφθη* (1 Cor 15.5–8; Lk 24.34; Acts 13.31; cf. 9.17; 26.16). This term is not to be translated as "he was seen" but as "he appeared." The term already appears in the LXX *Terminus*, which designates a Revelation event, even when it was not linked to visual perceptions.<sup>25</sup> This linguistic usage is taken up in the New Testament as, for example, Stephen's utterances in Acts 7.2: "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was [still] in Mesopotamia . . . and said to him" (cf. 7.30–35). Accordingly, Paul expressly characterizes the appearance experienced by him as God's revelation: "he [God] was pleased to reveal his Son to me" (Gal 1.15). Hence it is no accident that the Old Testament theophanies are the closest historical-genre analogies to the narratives describing

the appearance—a relationship which would warrant closer scrutiny. The query about the reality-content of the Easter events belongs, accordingly, with the query about the reality of the *revelatio specialis*, and not with that which investigates appearances of the dead or visions. Viewed in terms of this definition of the nature of the event, it is not enough when Hans Grass in his monograph on the Easter event declares that the Easter appearances were “objective visions.” God “in a series of visions revealed Christ as a living and exalted Lord to an elect circle of disciples, so that they would be certain: He lives!”<sup>28</sup> This declaration pushes the concept “to reveal” close to that of “to notify.” For the New Testament, however, Revelation is the self-offering of God. The disciples were not shown a picture that notified them of the Resurrection of Jesus. Through it, rather, they encountered the self-offering of the Resurrected One, or the self-offering of God.

The designation of the appearances in the Easter kerygma leads us further to the *Gospel narratives* of the Easter appearances. Viewed in terms of *historical tradition* they are not paradigms illustrating the Easter kerygma. Rather, they develop the reference to the witnesses in the Easter kerygma. Unfortunately, we do not have any Gospel traditions which develop the series of witnesses in 1 Cor 15. The substance of the Easter narratives corresponds to the kerygma of the Petrine sermons, which speak summarily of the disciples (Mt 28.16–20; Lk 24.36–49; Jn 20.19–29). Unfortunately, there is no analysis of the Easter narratives in terms of historical tradition corre-

sponding to the present-day state of research. In the essays in memory of R. H. Lightfoot, C. H. Dodd elaborated some valuable approaches.<sup>27</sup> Here we must content ourselves with an abridged procedure: we try to ascertain ground lines common to all the accounts. Since these ground lines belong to different schools of tradition, these accounts are old traditions, especially when their approach coincides with the kerygma. Later elaborations are in very distinct contrast to them.

According to these ground lines the Easter events are not simply a matter of appearances, but of *encounters* bearing a *dialogical character*. Altogether they have a twofold content.

One aspect is the *recognition*. The person of the apparition is not only recognized by His outward form but by His bearing. His appearance as such at first arouses question and doubt (Mt 28.17; Lk 24.32–41; Jn 21.4; Acts 9.5). He is recognized in His bearing because it was that which, experienced in His earthly days, led the disciples to the goal. The first appearance was experienced by the disciple who had denied Him, Peter. It does not signify a demonstration, but a renewed absolving self-offering. A forgiving self-offering had been the foundation of the sequence. In this appearance it attains its objective (1 Cor 15.4; Lk 24.34). The encounters with the rest of the disciples are of a similar kind. They have forsaken Him. He offers Himself anew to them for the formation of the new community. Perhaps as Father of a family He had once more broken bread with them (Lk 24, 30, 41ff; Acts 1.4, 10.41; Jn 21.13). Perhaps, concluding the instruction of the disciples

of His earthly days, He disclosed to them the meaning of His ministry. One aspect of the events, in all cases, was the renewed self-offering for the purpose of forming the community.

The other aspect was the *mission*. A circle of the Easter witnesses is commissioned to the apostolate. The kerygma in 1 Cor 15.7f likewise presupposes this, as do the Easter narratives (Mt 28.19; Lk 24.47; Jn 20.21; 21.15). In the Gospels the commission is formulated in a way which was understood by the second Christian generation. It is limited to the eleven disciples and related to the universal itinerant mission. Originally, the Appearing One, as is specifically established, had commissioned a definite circle of the Easter witnesses as His representatives. They were to continue his earthly activity in a special way, namely, the "service," which already simultaneously meant "missionary activity to those without," and "pastoral care to those within." A series of instructions are connected with this commission from which we can no longer ascertain to what extent they rightly link the tradition with the Easter appearances. They are the order to baptize (Mt 28.19) and the promise of His exalted presence above space and time in Mt (28.20; cf. 18.20) or the promise of the Spirit in Lk (24.49; Acts 1.7f; cf. Jn 20.22).

Taken all together then, the Easter appearances were encounters which terminated the self-offering of Jesus to His disciples in the earthly days. They have nothing in common with parousia. Hence it is in keeping with their character that in all the accounts *they remain limited to the circle of disciples of the earthly days*. No enemy, no person remote from this

circle, no latecomer experiences them. Paul designates himself as the exception: "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me." (1 Cor 15.8).<sup>28</sup>

The object of the appearances, as with the self-offering in the earthly days, is not knowledge but *faith*. The appearances fundamentally awaken faith in a way not different from that of the encounters of the earthly days. In both events faith means to accept the emergence of Jesus into one's faith in the God of Israel. What is now the content of this emergence? Jesus encounters those whom he does encounter as one who in God's stead offers Himself for the formation of the community, and as one who sends His disciples not as advocates of a cause but as His personal representatives, i.e., apostles. *In this way He brings about an encounter as a person in the full sense of that word*, i.e., corporeally. This is clearly stated in the language of the New Testament! (Even for Paul, the body according to its nature is what we call person. Elements of the Greek concepts of the body, which viewed it in terms of substance, entered the Easter narratives of Luke and John).<sup>29</sup> According to the Old Testament-Jewish conception, however, the corporeal existence of a deceased person constitutes the nature of the resurrection (1 Cor 15.35ff). The souls of the deceased are only shadows (2 Cor 5.1ff).<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, as soon as the disciples make their personal encounters with Jesus at the Easter appearances part of their faith in the God of Israel, they can do nothing else but profess that God has brought about the eschatological work of redemption in Him: He has raised Him from the dead!

This lonely resurrection would be a meaningless miracle had it been experienced by any other man, a rabbi or prophet. For the disciples, however, it is substantiated on the basis of an understanding of faith. They knew Jesus from their discipleship of the earthly days as Him through whom God effected His eschatological redemption. Even more they knew Him as the one who in His Person is the Promised One. Therefore they understand His resurrection and proclaim this understanding by interpreting the resurrection as His exaltation. To understand resurrection as exaltation was an obvious next step in terms of the origin of the Old Testament-Jewish hope of resurrection. In the oldest resurrection verses in the Bible, in Ps 73.23-28, in Is 26.7-19, and in Dan 12.1-3, raising from the dead is the exaltation of the righteous who have been condemned by men. For the disciples, however, Jesus is absolutely the Righteous One. Probably Jesus Himself had already typologically viewed His ministry in the light of the utterances about the righteous.<sup>31</sup> Hence the disciples understand His resurrection and interpret it as His exaltation to that of a heavenly Messianic Ruler. He further establishes God's eschatological rule through service until it is fulfilled in the near future through His visible parousia: the rule of the Exalted Lord is not understood statistically according to the image of the Messianic interregnum in the Apocalyptic, but dynamically in terms of Jesus' earthly activity according to Psalm 110. Therefore, it is materially linked to the parousian Christology.

Accordingly, the encounter with Jesus in the Easter appearances is interpreted on the basis of two Old Testament-Jewish traditions. The frame was provided by the expectation of the universal, eschatological resurrection, as it was elaborated by post-Old Testament Judaism. However, the Old Testament certainty concerning the exaltation of the righteous, which signifies resurrection, provided the actual center. In this way the Easter faith arose in the Easter appearances. In the Easter kerygma, however, it appropriately was not faith that was proclaimed but the deed of God underlying it.

4. Therefore the Easter kerygma in 1 Cor 15 encounters us as an *historical tradition*, i.e., as a form which contains historical elements, rendered exactly word by word ("in accordance with the scriptures," 1 Cor 15.3). If the Easter kerygma, in its nature, were the expression of a decision on faith on the part of the disciples, it would have merely stated: Jesus is risen. It could be accepted as a cipher for the understanding of one's own being and be rendered as a purely spiritual tradition in the sense of Rudolf Bultmann and Gerhard Ebeling. Then a purely functional concept of Church and office would be in the right. With Paul, however, the Easter kerygma is rendered as an historical tradition. Nevertheless, at the same time, in 1 Cor 15.1f, it is designated as "gospel," or *call leading over to faith*.<sup>32</sup> A Church which, in accordance with its nature, is at one and the same time historical, institutional, eschatological, and spiritual is in keeping with this twofold character of tradition. But how can this tradition, which is at once his-

torical and kerygmatic, be accepted in the faith without the faith becoming an historical assertion to be held true? This is our last question.

#### IV. *Easter kerygma and faith*

The New Testament gives us two answers in a surprising unanimity.

1. The Easter kerygma encounters not only the human attestation of a past deed of God. In the word of the witness, *God Himself is also effectively present*. Acts 5.32: "And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him." The Johannine Gospel, which theologically presents a polar antithesis to Luke, says the same. Jn 15.26f: "But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning." Certainly both occasions are meant: the attestation of the Spirit through the attestation of the witnesses. Hence Paul, in 1 Thess 2.13, can say: the believers received his proclamation not as a word of man, but as a word of God. The word of the proclamation lets faith shine in the heart as once the exhortation, "Let light shine out of darkness" enjoined the light to shine in the world (2 Cor 4.6). The Ego of faith is not the "old Adam" seizing the proffered opportunity to decide for God, but a new Ego who opposes the old man and answers God (2 Cor 5.17). As a response of the

new Ego, faith for Paul at the same time (in an indissoluble antinomy) is not the obedience of man (Rom 10.16). It is not a magical compulsion, but a personal obedience, a further recognition, an understanding. For John it is even a seeing. This is the second aspect of the New Testament regarding the relationship between the Easter kerygma and faith. The Easter kerygma is interpreted according to its content and object so that it can be grasped understandingly. This interpretation corresponds to the significance of the faith. Faith always addressed itself to God, never to the fact of resurrection as such. The form in Rom 10.9, "if you . . . believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead," is always meant in the sense of Rom 4.24, we "believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord." Accordingly, the interpretation of the Easter kerygma proclaims the Resurrection as the goal and point of departure of God's redemptive activity.

The resurrection of Jesus, on the one hand, is the goal of the work of God which has been wrought in the earthly activity of Jesus. Even more, it is the fulfillment of that which was experienced by the forefathers and Israel according to the Old Testament. For example, as we have already seen, Jesus' resurrection is understood in terms of the utterances of the psalms in reference to the righteous. Such highly unsystematic typological meditations lend themselves to being understood as the goal of God's work of redemption already accomplished. This is not the speculative world and historical view of the Apocalyptic as recently constructed by the group around W. Pannenberg.<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, as a goal in this sense the Resurrection is at the same time a *point of departure* of the work of God which meets us and aims at the consummation of the world. The Easter kerygma reaches us, when the resurrection of Jesus is explained, as the beginning of the efficacy of God which we also are now experiencing. In this way Rom 4 explains the Resurrection as the beginning of justification, Rom 6 as the point of departure of the co-Resurrection, and Rom 8 as the origin of the efficacy of the Spirit. Thus we arrive at the following conclusion: *The Resurrection of Jesus becomes the center of our faith in God, when we see it as the goal, center, and beginning of His work of salvation, and when we realize that this work of redemption reaches and includes us.* We are included, wherever the explicated Kerygma in the Holy Ghost calls the new Ego into life, who is "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Rom 6.11).

Faith includes an understanding of my own being, i.e., self-interpretation, but it does not disappear in it. For faith does not only see itself. It also sees the community of redemption. It sees both as the work of salvation wrought by God, who in His mercy Himself breaks through His governance according to the law. The *ratio* of the modern age, stemming from the Enlightenment, views lawfulness in nature and history with greater strictness than the man in New Testament times. As we said in the beginning, we must leave to systematic theology the task of establishing a relation between the Easter faith and this *ratio* with its philosophical and historical views. Fundamentally in any case, the situation of man in the age of the

New Testament was no different. Even ancient man knew the law according to which nobody returns from the dead. The Book of Wisdom discusses this destiny in a shattering way. Faith always signifies trust, in opposition to evidence, in that which calls non-being into being, which justifies the sinner and calls us and our dead with Christ into a new life. Faith does not live from a word that only interprets its world and history, but from the word which brings about what it asserts (Rom 4.17, 21). This word takes us out of the realm of half-truths and sets us into that of truth. It takes us out of the limited frame of partial realities into the broader frame of total reality.

## Notes

1. Reinhold Niebuhr's *Resurrection and Historical Reason*, 1957, is required reading concerning the systematic discussion of this question. See also the most recent systematic monographs: W. Künneth, *Theologie der Auferstehung* (4th ed.), 1951, Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 1962; G. Koch, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi*, 1959.
2. Johann Weiss, *Paulus und Jesus*, 1909, pp. 4f.
3. *Id.*, *Das Urchristentum*, 1917, p. 22.
4. Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 1913 (4th ed., 1935), pp. 17f.
5. Rudolf Bultmann, *Glaube und Verstehen*, I (3d ed., 1958) 114–133, 256–267.
6. *The Theology of the New Testament* (tr. Kendrick Grobel), Vol. I. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 7:3.
7. *Op. cit.* (Note 6) 33, 6C.
8. Hans Grass, *op. cit.* p. 244, n.l.
9. *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus* (2nd ed.), SAH 1961, p. 27.
10. Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1960.
11. Ernst Fuchs, "Das Neue Testament und das hermeneutische Problem," *ZThK* LVIII (1961), 205.
12. The same conclusion is reached by the informative research report of the theologian E. Schick, "Die Bemühungen in der neueren protestantischen Theologie um den Zugang zu dem Jesus der Geschichte, insbesondere zum Faktum seiner Auferstehung," *Bibliographische Zeitschrift*, n.s. VI (1962), 256–268.
13. Gerhard Ebeling, *Das Wesen des christlichen Glaubens*, 1959, p. 81.

14. For further queries about the Easter event cf. L. Goppelt, *Die apostolische und nachapostolische Zeit*, 1962 (*Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte*, Vol. I, A), 53.
15. I. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3d ed., 1952); E. Schweizer, *Erniedrigung und Erhöhung bei Jesus und seinen Nachfolgern* (2d ed.), 1962, pp. 87–109.
16. For example, H. Conzelmann, RGG<sup>3</sup> I, 698f; Id., "Jesus von Nazareth und der Glaube an den Auferstandenen," in the collection, *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus* (2d ed., 1961), pp. 198f; Günther Bornkamm, *op. cit.*, n. 10.
17. These traditions are discussed in L. Goppelt, *op. cit.* n. 14, pp. 8f, 14f.
18. Gerhard von Rad, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1960.
19. L. Goppelt, "Der verborgene Messias, in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus* (2d ed., 1961), pp. 377–384.
20. E. Schweizer, *op. cit.*, pp. 33–52, n. 15.
21. C. Colpe, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes von gnostischen Erlösermythus*, 1961.
22. The development of linguistic usage is carefully presented by E. Fascher, "Anastasis—Resurrectio—Auferstehung," ZNW, XL (1941–42), 166–229; cf. A. Oepke, ThW II, 332ff.
23. R. S. Russel, *Between the Testaments*, 1960; K. Schubert, "Die Entwicklung der Auferstehungslehre von der nachexilischen bis zur frührabbinischen Zeit," Biblische Zeitschrift, n.s. VI (1962), 177–214; Billerbeck II, 223–253; III, 827ff; IV, 971ff.
24. Wolfgang Nauck, "Die Bedeutung des leeren Grabes für den Glauben an den Auferstandenen, ZNW XLVII (1956), 243–267.
25. W. Michaelis, ThW V, 358f; K. H. Rengstorf, *Die Auferstehung Jesu* (4th ed., 1960), pp. 117–127.
26. Hans Grass, *op. cit.* pp. 246–249, n. 1.
27. C. H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ: An Essay in Form-Criticism of the Gospels," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, 1957, pp. 9–35.
28. In Luke the "ascension" is viewed as a sign that the appearances have terminated (Acts 1.9ff; cf. Lk 24.51). The whole New

Testament distinguishes fundamentally between the Easter appearances and the visions of Christ in the Spirit with which many were further favored (2 Cor 12.1).

29. Paul stresses (1 Cor 15.50ff), following Jesus (Mk 12.18-27 and parallels) in opposition to the apocalyptic rabbinical views of resurrection as a return to life in an improved state (Billerbeck I, 889f; III, 473ff), that it signifies an eschatological new becoming. On the other hand, Lk 24.39-47 and Jn 20.27 seem to talk about the encounter with a revived earthly body. Both evangelists wanted to stress corporeality against Docetism and the confusion with apparitions of the dead, but not a worldly ascertainability. They themselves remove their mistaken conceptualization by asserting at the same time that He came and went through closed doors (Lk 24.36; Jn 20.19, 25).

30. K. Schubert, *op. cit.*, pp. 177, n. 23, 187f.

31. L. Goppelt, *Typos: Die typologische Deutung des Alten Testaments im Neuen*, 1959, pp. 120-127; E. Schweizer, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-32, 53-62, n. 15.

32. On the discussion, cf. L. Goppelt, *Tradition bei Pls: Kerygma und Dogma* (4th ed., 1958), pp. 213-233.

33. W. Pannenberg, *Offenbarung als Geschichte* (2d ed., 1961), pp. 108f; "Thus the early Christian mission to the pagans, with good reason, made the expectation of the end of days and the resurrection of the dead a part of its missionary message. (1 Thess 1.9f; Heb 6.2). Paul rightly saw in it the presupposition for the knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor 15.16)." In reality Paul, conversely, grounded the expectation of the end of days on the basis of an interpretation of the Easter kerygma (1 Cor 15.20-28).

# The Resurrection Kerygma<sup>1</sup>

by Prof. Dr. D. Helmut Thielicke, D.D.

## I. *The significance of the Resurrection for the Christian faith*

In the New Testament record the central significance of Christ's being raised from the dead and becoming "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15.20), is unquestionably clear. It is established as a factual event, taking place within time and space, even though inexplicable within time and space. The statement about this transsubjective happening assumes the crucial position in the argumentation of 1 Cor 15, twenty-five years after Jesus' death. The emphasis of this expressly theological argumentation, however, is not upon the historical references to this happening and upon the manifold attestation of the Resurrection. These references, which, viewed exegetically, are localized as *introductory* remarks (vss. 1-8), form a first stage in the actual argumentation. Their significance is that of a prolegomenon, and it is twofold: (1) these references are supposed to appeal to and bolster the healthy historical conscience of the Church, and (2) they are supposed to maintain the transsubjective nature

of the Resurrection. This they do by referring to its historical foundation, whereby they provide a prophylaxis against every tendency to spiritualize the Resurrection, against every interpretation which seeks to explain it subjectively, on the basis of psychogenetic conceptions.

However, this historical reference is not in reality a theological argument. Although the preamble of verses 1 and 2 implies the meaningfulness of this historical event (*Historie*) for the faith, the historical discussion alone does not disclose what fateful importance this event (this transsubjective event!) may have for the existence of the Christian.

This crux of the argumentation begins at verse 12, and in the section that follows, Paul uses a syllogism *e contrario*. He asks in his leading question: where would we be if Christ were not raised from the dead? If He were not, everything else which evangelical and apostolic preaching embraces would be not only incomplete and fragmentary, an "i" without its dot, but it would all be totally untenable and worthless. Our preaching would be in vain—even what we might preach about the words and deeds of the historical Jesus. Your faith would collapse, even the faith that "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities" (Is 53.5). We would be unmasked as false witnesses, for even what we had preached about the death of Christ would no longer be true: we had overinterpreted this death as an atoning event and rendered it a rank and an effect which it could not have at all—if Christ were not raised from the dead. We would still be in our sins; we would still be confined to our mortality.

And even those dead who had confessed in their last hour that He was their only comfort in life and death had gambled on the wrong card and were become fools.

Paul conjures up this apocalyptic nightmare in order to show how much depends upon the fact of the Resurrection. It is not Paul's intention in this passage to assert that the Resurrection kerygma discloses the significance of the birth, life, passion, and death of Christ. He intends much more, and he goes about it partly as a schoolmaster, pedantically listing catalogues of witnesses, and partly as the conjurer of apocalyptic consequences. In both rôles he is emphatically unambiguous: the Resurrection establishes this significance, rather than disclosing it; the Resurrection effects it ontically.<sup>3</sup>

Were the Resurrection kerygma only the disclosure of this significance, then the life and death of Jesus would and could be significant without this final disclosure. Of course, I might not understand them thus, but that would be only because the noetic evidence was lacking.

Paul says the exact opposite thing. Without the Resurrection, the life and passion and death of Jesus are robbed of any redemptive meaning. Jesus must surrender His calling as Savior—he never really had received *that* calling.

The Resurrection does not "disclose" something (in any event, it is not its point to disclose something), rather it enforces, initiates, mobilizes. It does not just shower light upon an event which otherwise would remain dark, rather it makes that event what it is: redemptive history. It renders the event of the life of Christ the privilege to be more than the subject of

one biography among others. In other words, the Resurrection has ontic and not only noetic meaning.<sup>4</sup>

All references to the Resurrection's significance have then but one intention—to underline that it is an ontic event. Christ has been raised. Prior to all existentialist interpretations, which certainly have their subsequent rights as means of appropriation, there stands the ontological decree.

Just as Paul argues negatively and *e contrario*, one could proceed with positive statements, as does G. Wingren: "Let us assume that Christ is risen, resurrected with everything which this fact encompasses: exaltation, judicial authority, the power to give life, the authority to forgive sins forever. Assuming this, we would have in the fact of the Resurrection sufficient reason to preach to every race that is born and to every nation that lives on earth. The often unmentioned presupposition of every attack upon Christianity is the persuasion, frequently regarded as a truism, that Christ never did rise from the dead. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

## II. *The problem of facticity*

With that we have come to the problem of the facticity of the Easter event, the *quaestio facti*. That kerygmatic theology tends to ignore this side of the problem, and why it does so, can be readily explained. We will penetrate to the real problem of facticity only when we have broken through the blockade of the kerygmatic school's argumentation.

Why, then, does the problem of facticity recede in keryg-

matic theology? If I judge correctly, there are three reasons for this:

A. *The facticity of the event is replaced by the question about its significance.* In the face of this question, the ontological query about the essence and character of the event itself recedes. This consideration has in turn its own reasons, found in the basic approach of Bultmannian thinking, which might be summarized as follows:

For reasons which are well known, and which may therefore be passed over, the deeds of God cannot appear or be discovered in tangible forms (*Vorfindlichkeit*). Such appearances are much more the hallmarks of myth, which, as one form of expression, is to be taken seriously and certainly not dismissed. However, the true message, the real contents of such a mythological statement, can only be grasped through interpretation, that is, by penetrating through the mythological form of expression to the core. When the question is raised, "What is the mythical form of expression itself trying to convey?"—then only one answer can be given: such texts are seeking to alter my own interpretation of myself. This transformation would be achieved if, for example, I could be brought to become contemporary with myself, that is, if I no longer am bound to my past or, through worry, cast into the future, but win the present for myself.<sup>6</sup> Only by interpreting such texts in view of my "understanding of my own being" or self-interpretation (*Selbstverständnis*) can these two desired results be accomplished: (1) I can distill the kerygma out of

its bonds of time, from its disguise in a certain world-view ("the earth is flat"). Thus I learn that the system of cosmological coordinates, in the midst of which the kerygmatic statement appears, is not an article of faith. These enigmas within the statements of the faith do not form the legitimate object of my faith. I am not obliged to believe in concepts current in another age; I may believe as a modern man. (2) Following this sifting out of the merely and temporally historical element, the positive realization and application of this message can be made as I interpret the kerygma towards and in light of my self-interpretation, as I interpret it *ad hominem*. Such an interpretation is possible when I learn that this kerygma does genuinely concern me, because it deals with the themes of existential knowledge which I had already been conscious of and which already had been of genuine concern to me. It is such issues that are the real content of the kerygma, questions like righteousness, or the problem of guilt. The dim awareness of such questions, what is called a "pre-understanding" (*Vorverständnis*), is remolded by the kerygma into a new understanding.

According to Bultmann, an historic and revelational event in time can therefore no longer be accepted as a fact which penetrated reality, even reality external to man, and altered it (i.e., a miracle!)-that would be tantamount to a mythological understanding! Bultmann can only acknowledge a revelational event which succeeds in bringing about this new self-interpretation, such as man alone would never have been capable of producing. No extra-human reality is at work here: a change

in the subjective consciousness of man takes place. The Johannine predicate, "The Word became flesh," does not signify the historical event in the stable at Bethlehem, but the transformation of my self-interpretation, which originates in that historical event. This is, in our opinion, a legitimate interpretation of Bultmann. To put it succinctly, what is reported as history in the New Testament is not itself an event, but only the prelude to an event: namely, the event of the transformation of my human self-consciousness.

Therefore, when Bultmann, in contrast to the liberal theologians, seems to emphasize the event-character of the kerygma very strongly, we should not deceive ourselves about the real status of this event. We have the impression, and we hope to substantiate it more exactly in that which follows, that the event has, so to speak, the rank of a "postulate," that is, an *a posteriori* conclusion based on the Christian's self-consciousness or his existential understanding of human life.

We mean by this: the new understanding of existence spoken of is made possible only through the deed, the Christ-event, which stands in the background. However, it is definitely in the background and steps no more into the foreground than the postulated God does in Kant. It seems to us that, according to Bultmann, both the New Testament men and we are sitting in the famous Platonic cave and see only a shadow of our consciousness, which leads us to the inductive conclusion about the reality causing the shadow. Where Bultmann wants to say something supra-mythological about this core-event, which is the background of Christian self-interpre-

tation, he must say something negative: "Our interest in the events of His life, and above all in the Cross, is more than an academic concern with the history of the past. We can see meaning in them only when we ask what God is trying to say to each one of us through them. Again, the figure of Jesus cannot be understood simply from His context in human evolution or history. In mythological language, this means that he stems from eternity, his origin transcends both history and nature."<sup>7</sup> Eternity is simply another way of saying that the logos which has projected itself into *sarx* involves an understanding of human life which cannot be discovered in the objective and tangible world around us. The verse in question would, in Bultmann's sense, be better stated, *logos ouk ex sarkos egeneto* (John 1.14).

We said earlier, "a change in the subjective consciousness of man" is the crucial event. We must now add that this human consciousness does not develop from itself, auto-genetically, through personal genius, or Socratically. It requires an event to release it—we might say that it needs to be deistically ignited. This is the basically negative indirect statement about the event underlying the New Testament kerygma and about the understanding of human life mediated by it, which we believe we may deduce from Bultmann's thinking.

As far as the Resurrection is concerned, its facticity is no longer of interest to me. What is important is the way in which the statement *about* the Resurrection (regardless of what stands behind it ontically) yields something towards my understanding of Christ. In this context Bultmann asserts: "Can the

resurrection narrative (!) be anything else than the expression (!) of the significance of the Cross?"<sup>8</sup> We emphasize the terms "narrative" and "expression." If only the transformation of my self-interpretation is the issue at stake, I need not reflect about an event. This self-interpretation can be influenced by any assortment of words, messages, and philosophical dicta—perhaps by Goethe's *Faust*-kerygma.

The discussion of the Resurrection is only important to me in so far as I experience through it how the first Church interpreted the Cross, as "the judgment of the world, the judgment and the deliverance of man."<sup>9</sup> Thus the death of Jesus is regarded as something more and different than a martyr's death. It is laden with a significance which no one noted at the moment of its happening, but which first became clear to the disciples as they reflected on it, under the influence of visionary impulses.

Bultmann's interpretation has removed the stumbling block caused by assuming the facticity of the Resurrection. Such an assumption has thrown every historical way of thinking into confusion, the confusion rendered by conceiving something as "happened" which fell outside the framework of normal historical events, like birth, pain, and death, which was non-verifiable in principle. Apparently he has killed two birds with one stone: (1) the time-bound categories (magic, myth, world-view) have been removed as hindrances to faith, because they no longer are essential to faith; (2) what "once happened" becomes contemporary as it leads to the transformation of the understanding of my own being.

B. This intellectual approach leads to fundamental consequences for theological epistemology in general. The most important of these consequences I would label the *Abrogation of the Subject-Object Correlation*. Wherever the existentialist interpretation is applied, the emphasis shifts from the "once happened" to the "what is happening to me now," which is the transformation of my self-interpretation, in other words, the event of faith.

What is happening *now* is what has true redemptive-historical significance: our dying with and rising with Christ (Paul). The "once happened," which is reported in the New Testament about death and resurrection, is not a chain of events which can be loosed from these "now events." Those historical happenings are not the prerequisites for this dying with and rising with Christ. It could take place simply on the basis of "talking about . . ." the Resurrection (for instance, "talking about . . ." it in the form of a parable). This dying and rising with Christ could be carried out by "talking about . . ." it in the sense of *Stirb und Werde* (die and become). The kerygmatic report about what once happened and the kerygmatic promise about what can now happen are inextricably intertwined. What once happened can only be understood by the man who has experienced the redemption of this "Die and Become." The significance of what once happened does not rest in the possibility that it could actually have taken place; it is meaningful only if it succeeds in releasing and transforming the here and now. And this release can be effected by the kerygma, by "talk about" something, by the

mere report of what took place. What is reported about, proclaimed, or talked about, can easily remain an *X* in the ontological sense. What now happens assumes an equal if not superior position to that which we usually call redemptive history, in other words, what actually took place in the years one to thirty.<sup>10</sup>

The result: what we believe in, whether it is a past event or is reported to be such, cannot be divorced from the present realization of faith. This is what is meant by the Abrogation of the Subject-Object Correlation.

C. The third major consideration in the discussion of the kerygmatic school's approach to facticity is the *interrelationship of faith and historical knowledge*.

When the kerygmatic school carries out the abrogation discussed above, it does so on the basis of some other reasons which we must examine and critically illuminate. They have already been intimated in the Tübingen quotation (see note 10).

The abrogation of the subject-object correlation is based upon the serious concern that preservation of the correlation could lead to the following epistemological situation:

The attempt might be made to establish *extra fidem* (perhaps through philological or historical analyses) a certain occurrence (in this case, the Resurrection) as an objective, factual event—that is, a miracle which has happened. By doing this, the possibility of believing in this historically mediated miracle would be provided. Such faith would then be the subsequent subjective agreement to something already objectively

apprehended. And this would certainly be an impossible arrangement. Yet we must ask whether this undesirable arrangement can be avoided only by abrogating the subject-object correlation itself and then logically reducing the ontic character of the Easter event to irrelevance. We certainly agree with Bultmann and his students (especially Ebeling) in their emphasis that historical apprehension and faith cannot be isolated from one another in the way we have described, for they are part and parcel of each other. Faith is no subsequent agreement to something already established *extra fidem*. The act of understanding Easter is an act involved in faith itself. This is so because our act of apprehension, as far as it is directed to things and events which concern our existence, is an *opus* which is predetermined by the condition of the acting and apprehending person. *Hinc fit, quod . . . velit, cupiat faciat, taliter, qualis ipse est.*<sup>11</sup> He who is bound to finiteness and to the tangible reality around us, and who is qualified by both these factors in his *ipse*-being, cannot comprehend what transcends both finiteness and tangible reality. Only the man whose very existence has been taken up into the death and Resurrection of the Lord and transformed is put into the analogous situation through which the Resurrection can become a possible object of knowing and apprehending. The knowledge we mean can only be one through which faith is related to its object. The believer alone can apprehend this event. He who is in the truth, who exists in a believing reconsummation of the death and Resurrection of Jesus, hears the voice of the

empty grave—but only he. Apart from this situation of faith, Easter is indeed unverifiable.<sup>12</sup>

D. This is especially true of the Easter event; we could speak of the *ontological distinctiveness of the Easter event*, for it, as well as the virgin birth and the ascension, cannot be aligned ontologically with “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried,” which are objectifiable events of history. However, the non-objectifiable nature of the Resurrection is to be strictly divorced from the question whether it is objective,<sup>13</sup> that is, whether it really happened or should better be ascribed to the subjective visionary experiences of the disciples. This kind of objectivity implies the ontic character of a real event which happens in the real world outside of consciousness, ecstatic experience, and visions. And this kind of objectivity (“it really happened”) is claimed *strictissime* by the New Testament with all available arguments. The question of “objectifiability,” on the other hand, deals with the noetic problem: how far is it possible to substantiate the Resurrection event *extra fidem*: neutrally, “for the record.” This possibility of objectifiability is denied by the New Testament as unequivocally as the question of the objectivity (trans-subjectivity) of the factual is affirmed by the New Testament.

We see this emphasized in the fact that no one substantiated the Resurrection who was not in communication with Jesus Christ. No heathen and no Jew is quoted as witness. Yet in order to make the testimony more impressive and to preclude the objection that it was the bias of the believers, there would

have been considerable interest in such neutral witnesses *extra fidem*—if such objectifiability had been held possible. The disciples were already well enough schooled by Him who had walked upon earth to know that the miracle is fundamentally non-objectifiable, although it is possible to perceive it even with the senses (as in the feeding of the multitudes and the healing of the sick). It is characteristic that the miracle remains basically ambiguous: a miracle is supposed to have a message (that is basic to its nature as a *semeion*), but in doing so it does not dispense with faith in favor of unambiguous sight—it challenges faith and refuses to provide objectifiable knowledge.

The New Testament reserve towards possible objectifiability of the Easter miracle is also expressed in that the categorical testimony to the fact of the Resurrection almost completely suppresses the question about how it happened (this is particularly noticeable in contrast to the apocryphal reports). Where we do find traces of an attempt to objectify the event (the guards at the grave, the stories about the angels), the influence of legend-forming fantasy is undeniable (for when men are totally grasped by something, their fantasies also want to testify to it). It is at this point that we find the contradictions in the accounts. I find these contradictions quite edifying, because they show how in the smallest attempts (and they are really small attempts) to objectify the miracle our categories become confused. A good example of this is the story of Paul's conversion, where audition and vision are confused, and the functions of the eye and ear can no longer be distinguished. For another illustration we might turn to physi-

ology, where we could find an analogy in Johannes Müller's "doctrine of specific sense energies." A man who receives a blow on his head will often hear a buzzing in his ears and see spots before his eyes. Although the stimulus was neither optical nor acoustical in nature, it produces these sense impressions—the senses react as though they had been simultaneously stimulated. They in turn produce other reactions, but not independently, rather, still in reaction to its original outside stimulus—we might say that the stimulus is "witnessed to" by these reactions. However, the eye really saw nothing, and the ear really heard nothing, because the effect of a stimulus not perceptible by these sensory organs is transferred to them. So, such indirect reactions to the one stimulus (the blow) can be contradictory: one person hears a buzzing, another hears bells ringing, a third sees dancing rays of light, and someone else sees a rainbow. Here is an analogy to the attempt to transpose the "supra-sensual" Resurrection event into the dimension of the senses. The love of truth of the New Testament witnesses, who avoided harmonizing these transcending sections of the reports, and who instead let them stand in their contradictions, practically provides us an illustration of non-objectifiability. Although the New Testament reporters could not have described this noetic situation in epistemological language, they have acknowledged it through their maintenances of these contradictions with the instinct of the children of God, unknowingly and against their wills.

This we may consider certain: the non-objectifiability of the Resurrection is to be strictly divorced from its ontic char-

acter as a transsubjective event. This non-objectifiability is expressed in the New Testament through the extensive rejection of statements about "how it happened." The transsubjectivity is expressed in the New Testament through the strictest attestation of the fact that it happened.

When Ebeling confirms the invisibility of the knowledge of the Resurrection from faith in the Resurrected One, he appeals with right to Luther.<sup>14</sup> However he appeals to Luther incorrectly in as far as he considers faith the arena where redemptive events take place, and what once happened—the Christological event—basically a function of the "now" of faith. Another way to illuminate the epistemological problem would be to consider Kantian transcendentalism to which Bultmann is rather directly related through his teacher Herrmann, even though he is probably not fully aware of it. Here, what is actually real is the world of my experience. The *Ding an sich*, as an ontic X in the background of my world of experience, affects my forms of perception and my categories, and constitutes in "collaboration" with them this my world of experience. The original ontic X cannot be conceived of itself, and that which really happens is to be found in the "now," the *Jetzt* of my experiential act. It is then a simple step to replace this experiential act with the act of faith and to replace the *Ding an sich* with the events of the years 1 to 30, in order to have the correct analogy. If I may put it in an over-simplified way, all the objects of religious faith could not exist for one second without me, without my structure of consciousness, without my appropriation, without the transformation of my self-interpretation.

For they only "exist" in their significance. But their significance is evoked by my recognition, by my interpretation, which re-works the "objects" in the process. Self-consciousness affected by an ontic *X* constitutes the experiential world of faith. This results in that mystical position, expressed in the words of Angelus Silesius, that God could not live a moment without me. The christological events could not live a moment without me, without my faith, because they are dependent upon this faith, they exist only in relation to it, and thereby they lose their ontic uniqueness and even their ontic character.

Wobbermin was thinking along similar lines when he repeated Luther's sentence over and over again: *Glaube und Gott gehören zu Hauf* (faith and God belong together). Luther meant, of course, that no statements about God can be made outside of faith. But Wobbermin drew the false conclusion that faith *constitutes* God in His Being (*Sosein*) as it confronts me. And this is completely contrary to Luther. For Luther's ontology of the Word of God, it is decisive that this Word is a real, transsubjective event, an event which also takes place even when man does not perceive it at all or misunderstands it if he does perceive it.<sup>15</sup>

One observation in confirmation of my argument may be made in passing: the rejection of the ontic event-character of what once happened, as an event independent of faith, also has its effect on eschatology. For now the term "eschatological" must refer to the mere "aspect" under which I view the facts and reports from once upon a time, namely, that I do not consider them important historically, in their place in the chrono-

logical roll of time, but that I consider them meaningful for every possible understanding of human life. Eschatology has nothing to do then with the doctrine of things to come and events whose actual commencement I am awaiting, such as the parousia. No, eschatology simply paraphrases the meaningfulness of messages whose ontic backgrounds have shifted out of the field of vision. "If faith does not rest fundamentally upon events, then fundamentally it can be no expectation of events."<sup>16</sup> The expected second Advent is replaced by the eschatological *nunc aeternum*, the Kierkegaardian moment. And so the Christ who once appeared is the end of history,<sup>17</sup> and we need no longer wait for this end to come. From this perspective we see again how history is curiously deprived of its reality.<sup>18</sup>

### III. *How do we arrive at a legitimate confirmation of facticity?*

A first step to a confirmation of facticity is made with the help of history (*Historie*): the analysis of texts. The goal of our query, under which the texts are to be examined, is first of all the question: how far do these texts seek to establish a trans-subjective event which takes place in time and space? Secondly we ask: do they place a theological value on this transsubjective element, and if so, how great a value? To draw conclusions about these questions is the duty of New Testament science. We may content ourselves here with the conclusions that both questions, independent of all differences in detail, are to be

answered positively. The systematic theologian has another duty here than the New Testament expert. He has to say something about the fundamental importance of such text analyses in cases where we are dealing with the question whether and to what extent they can aid faith to an assurance about the facticity of its object. This particular question is very important methodologically.

What we have already said implies that it would be false if the text analyses were required to provide faith with indubitable historical data and thereby enable it to have objective historical certainty about the fact of the Resurrection rather than a certainty based on faith itself. Such false arguments like to assert that "we are dealing here with the best-attested fact in the world's history." I have already mentioned that the New Testament does not speak of a neutral, noncommittal confirmation of the Resurrection event for a very good reason. He who has no relationship to the Resurrected One—and that can only be a relationship of faith—can never grasp the Resurrection. The Resurrected One is not only Lord over death but also over the Resurrection itself.

That historical proofs do not serve the faith by making it credible or by preceding it as its condition is made exemplarily clear in the rôle of the empty grave. Even if one agrees with Hans von Campenhausen<sup>19</sup> that the unprejudiced analysis of the historian leads to the conclusion that the grave with great probability was empty, this confirmation cannot establish a "faith-easing" or "faith-enabling" miracle. There are three reasons for this:

1. The theological reason: a faith thus bound to miraculous preconditions would be no faith at all, for it would have been surpassed by sight and thereby dispensed with (Jesus refers to this confusion when he reproaches those who "lust for signs").
2. The empirical reason: there are other interpretations of the fact that Jesus' body disappeared. This disappearance is subject to ambiguity. That is not only an empirical conclusion but also contains a theological evaluation of that "other" which penetrates the empirical: it confirms the ambiguity of every miracle and the fact that faith must not be dispensed with by objective sight.
3. The ontological reason: the Resurrection stories refer indeed to the identity of the Resurrected One and the One who walked on earth. They do this, for example, when they refer to the wounds of the Crucified One, which the Resurrected One also bears (Jn 20.25ff). But they refer at the same time to the discontinuity of the physical existence (1 Cor 15.35ff). He who walked on earth is distinguished from the Resurrected One by a different quality of body, which is analogous to the different types of being of the first Adam (*psyche zosa*) and the second Adam (*pneuma zoopoiooun*) (1 Cor 15.45). Consequently, Resurrection faith is not bound to the fact of the empty grave, for this fact can, at most (and then only with ambiguity), express something about the fate of the "old body," but nothing about the diversity of the body before and after the Resurrection, which is an essential part of the Resurrection message.

Therefore, the empty grave is not that which makes faith

possible. Precisely the opposite: it can call forth the reaction, "They have taken away the Lord—not that too!" It is only in connection with the Resurrection appearances that the subsequent question about the empty grave is taken as a confirmation for the faith, already present, in the Resurrected One, and that it now (but not until now) is understood as a testimony to the factual background, a testimony to the nonsubjective reality of the confrontation with the Resurrected One.

#### *IV. The importance of the search for historical truth*

Since, then, what we historically can substantiate cannot consequently be used to provide a basis for faith, we might ask if the search for historical truth is at all important. Is it not sufficient when one takes note of the kerygma as it stands in the Gospel, without initiating an historical-critical probe? If that is not sufficient, if the Resurrection kerygma is to be subjected to the search for historical truth, for facticity, then this endeavor must be based upon other reasons than the presumed provability or even supportability of faith. The never-ending task and simultaneously the theological importance of historical-critical work upon the contents of faith is to be based, in my opinion, upon the following arguments:

A. *Historical reason may not be suppressed.* For that would mean that faith does not take possession of the whole man, but that certain sectors of the ego remain fenced off. Faith would then be confined to a partial religious province. Psychologically, this degeneration of faith would mean that the believer

would have to suppress certain sides of the truth question (here, the historical side). But the believer is just as indivisible as the truth itself—he cannot be separated into a religious and a rational ego. Similarly, a conflict could never develop between the truths of faith and reason, between truths of redemption and of history. The various searches for truth must go on side by side. That is the *one* reason for the search for the historical facticity of the content of the faith.

B. Furthermore, it is only in pressing the historical search for objectivity that *the boundary becomes clear which divides this search from faith's unique relationship to its historical content*. While point *A* demonstrated how much historical work serves the faith (in that it emphasizes its indivisibility), we feel that point *B*, conversely, shows how crucial faith itself is to the self-knowledge of the one who is seeking historical truth. To demonstrate this, I refer to the statement in 1 Cor 15.17<sup>20</sup>: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."

This verse expresses two thoughts:

1. If Christ remained dead and possesses therefore no death-conquering presence, then He can not forgive sins.
2. (This is the decisive point.) If and as long as you are still in your sins, as long as you have not died to sin and are therefore still imprisoned by it, then you can neither accept nor understand the news of the Resurrection. For as long as this is so, it must remain your primary interest to maintain your independence and to insure that Christ will not become Lord over you. Whoever wants to be lord over himself cannot tolerate

another Lord's domination. He cannot even accept the news that such a Lord exists by authority of his Resurrection. Wingren says: "Included in the facticity about which we are speaking is the facticity of our own imprisonment."<sup>21</sup>

Here is what takes place: the historian's attention is not drawn to the epistemological difficulty which arises when he is supposed to verify an acausal, nonanalogous event, not qualified by immanence, such as the Resurrection. The historian already knows this difficulty well. It is his responsibility to raise it. It belongs to the realm of philosophical epistemology.

The historian here is confronted with a completely different difficulty, one which he cannot explain away or resolve, for it is essential to the faith itself. This difficulty arises out of the fact that without Christ we are imprisoned, we are *mente capti*, who for existential reasons—our self-assertiveness, our anthropocentrism, and our supposed autonomy—are hindered from recognizing realities as they emerge in history, realities which threaten this our basic existentialist posture. Paul alludes here to the relationship of knowledge and sin, as he does in Rom 1.18ff. Knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) is by far not just an issue of reason and its critique (as Kant thought), but it is also an issue of existence, whose hopes and fears condition reason. To put it Thomistically, the issue is not simply the *natura* of reason, but also its existential *conditio*.<sup>22</sup>

The factual situation we have here can only be described dialectically:

First thesis: only the fact that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead makes it possible for me to die with him (i.e., to

die to sin and escape its slavery) and simultaneously to rise with him in order to "walk in newness of life" (Rom 6.4), and to be "of the truth" (Jn 18.37).

Second thesis: only when I am in the truth do I hear His voice; only when I die and rise again with Christ can I perceive *His* death and *His* resurrection.

Conclusion: faith must acknowledge the historical research of its contents, in order to reveal to the historian his limits and his possibilities: his limits insofar as he could be "enslaved" and therefore also biased, and that also hindrances could be awaiting him about which he would know nothing without the faith; his possibilities insofar as he, as a believer, can penetrate through to certainty; he is even able legitimately to inquire after the facticity of that which has established his new being, although this facticity cannot be nailed down with the immanent criteria of historical science.

C. The decisive reason for the necessity of historical research in our context is, however, the irrevocability of *anti-criticism*.<sup>23</sup> Even if historical research cannot be considered the critical surveyal of a territory upon which faith could settle down, it does have the task of determining whether the results of historical criticism contradict the Easter faith or whether they do not. Naturally, nothing can be the object of our faith which stands in evident contradiction to the factual. In such a case the postulate developed in point A, that the truth is indivisible, would be violated. The Easter faith would then be possible only by means of a schizophrenia of our human consciousness—which would be unbearable and unallowable. The

task of historical research of the Easter faith is not critical preparation leading up to a decision, but *anti-criticism*, in other words, the intellectual encounter with those historical-critical considerations whose results could deprive the Easter faith of its historical foundations. To be sure, this encounter will have to deal incidentally with detailed analyses, but above all it must deal with the question whether or not errors in epistemological approach may be found in the presuppositions of such historical-critical considerations—errors like that which we called the bias of “imprisonment,” which then are condensed into definite methodological axioms, as in Troeltsch’s criteria for historical verifiability.

*The task of anti-criticism includes therefore the stipulation that exactly determinable facts may not contradict the Easter faith.* Were an unambiguous psychological explanation of the Resurrection experiences possible, then the disciples would be unmasked as deceivers. If everything in the Resurrection accounts could be consistently proven to be legendary, then the Easter faith would be untenable. Nothing less than this is the scope of my thesis. At most there would remain a certain respect for the profound interpretation which later generations had blown into this legendary balloon.

This anti-critical task of history is crucial to other New Testament themes—the search for the historical Jesus, for example. Since Martin Kähler it has been clear to us that and why the historical Jesus, as investigated by secular and unprejudiced science, cannot be the object of faith, when he is already a “given” before the faith. I need not go into this issue

here. In spite of that, the task of objectivizing science and consequently the question of the historical Jesus has been by no means answered. The same is true here in principle as was true of historical research and the Easter theme: such research, when conducted by theologians, is obliged to practice anti-criticism. In this sense Ebeling has correctly remarked, "For Christology [i.e., for statements about who Jesus Christ is] the reference to [the historical] Jesus is constitutive . . . therefore Jesus is the criterion of Christology. Were it to be proven that Christology had no basis in the historical Jesus, or even was a misinterpretation of Jesus, then Christology would be finished."<sup>24</sup>

More has been tackled here, however, than the mere task of providing a healthy historical conscience for faith in Christ. In this case we see a break-through, which incidentally can be observed otherwise in the Bultmann school, which penetrates through the mere Christ-kerygma, through the mere "tidings of . . .," to the attested reality itself. The first approaches may be seen of a movement which is working against the whole process which deprived history of its reality and displaced it into the sole sphere of human consciousness. The query about ontic events is sounding here, particularly *the* ontic event which summons us at the turning point of aeons to a new being—not just to a new human consciousness.

#### V. *Anti-criticism and the vision hypothesis*

Anti-criticism faces only one issue with which it must seri-

ously grapple: the vision hypotheses, which historians tend to posit within the framework of the Resurrection theme. This hypothesis, which often has already been elevated to a "thesis," maintains that the kerygma of the Resurrection is adequately explained by subjective experiences of the disciples. Reference to actual confrontations in the real world are not necessary for this explanation. Now, it is true that this hypothesis cannot be refuted frontally. For if it could be, then the refutation itself would approximate a proof of the Resurrection, as it would exclude all other possible explanations and only permit the one conclusion, that a supernatural event took place here. Aside from the epistemological problems of such a negative proof, it must be emphasized that this proof is theologically untenable. For it seeks to objectify the miracle and thereby accomplish something which contradicts the nature of the miracle as attested in the New Testament: it would deprive the miracle of its ambiguity—be it the "epistemological" ambiguity that it could always be explained with the help of natural causality (trance in resurrection miracles, psychosomatic factors in miraculous healings, etc.), or be it the "theological" ambiguity that the devil could be cast out by the power of Beelzebub rather than by the Spirit of God (Mt 9.34).

Because of this essential characteristic of ambiguity, historical anti-criticism cannot be obliged to prove the unequivocal factuality of a supernatural incident on the third day simply by excluding all other explanations, the vision hypothesis among them. Anti-criticism has the one and only task, in the name of its theological awareness of ambiguity of demolishing the ille-

gitimate *unambiguity* which a secular historian will ascribe to his vision thesis. For this historical-critical *unambiguity* is just as incorrect as the pseudo-theological *unambiguity* with which a certain orthodox theology attempts to prove the fact of the Resurrection positively or *e contrario*.

Anti-criticism, consequently, does not have the task of refuting the vision hypothesis as such (which it cannot do), but it does have the task of refuting a certain rank which this hypothesis claims for itself, namely, the rank of *unambiguity*: the thesis which can be precisely documented.

What does this anti-criticism look like? As a systematician, my responsibility is more to define and limit the scope of the task, while the actual resolution of this question falls in the realm of my colleagues in New Testament studies.

To do my part, a preliminary question must be asked: how did the vision hypothesis develop in the first place? Then I should like to list a few of the forms which this hypothesis has taken.

How did it come to be?

Even the most extreme of critics cannot dispute the fact that between the crucifixion of Christ and the faith of the first Church in the Resurrected One something had to have taken place. For Golgotha left Jesus' followers in despair and resignedly abandoned. They had scattered to the four winds. That they then, in a span of time so short that a psychological explanation of their regeneration is impossible, should come together again and worship this bankrupt figure, who had been

executed on the gallows, as the Lord, implies some significant occurrence during the interval.

Since the historian, in the name of his constraining categories, not only must speak of the non-objectifiability of a supernatural fact, but also must dispute such a fact in principle, there remains little left for him than to assign this "interim event" to the subjective experience of the disciples and to talk about visions. The explanation looks then something like this, as D. F. Strauss developed it: the effect of Jesus of Nazareth upon his disciples was so lasting and persistent that they could not conceive of Him being destroyed by death, so they began to believe in his afterlife. This psychogenetic belief was then projected into objective forms and molds which led to the visionary impression that the Resurrected One had actually met them. Thus the Resurrection story has been radically deprived of all reality and reduced to the level of inner psychic experiences.

Bultmann's vision hypothesis does not go quite so far. In it the margin of reality can be discerned which he *always* strives to maintain and which is supposed to sustain the correspondence between human consciousness and history (*Geschichte*), even when the historical counterpart remains the non-objectifiable X about which we spoke. In any event, he wants to keep it from becoming a mere prisoner of human consciousness. For this reason he opposes a purely psychogenetic-imaginary understanding of the Easter faith. "A vision is never purely subjective. It always has an objective basis. In the vision

the encounter which precedes it attains fruition, so that the vision itself becomes a further encounter. . . . Similarly, in a dream our eyes are opened upon ourselves, and our sleeping conscience awakened. It is foolish to regard dreams and visions merely as subjective experiences. They are in a real sense objective encounters. What the disciples saw was the product of imagination in the sense that they projected what they saw into the world of space and sense. But that does not make what they saw imaginary. The faith evoked by the preaching of the gospel is no more subjective than a man's love for his friend. It is directed towards an object which is not purely external to him, but which operates as a reality within him.<sup>25</sup>

In Bultmann's own words we see our thesis confirmed—Bultmann is desperately striving to avoid the dead end of an immanentist philosophy of human consciousness. He seriously wants to maintain the historic character of the kerygma.

And we also observe the impossibility of guaranteeing this historic foundation on the basis of an approach like Bultmann's. Faith is no longer dependent upon the fact of the Resurrection. Now the Resurrection is dependent upon the faith which results from an encounter with Christ, with the Jesus of Nazareth who walked on earth. But then the Resurrection is nothing more than the pictorial symbol of an encounter, but never an event itself.

It is clear that a certain credulity in science, expressed in the belief that a supernatural event must be not only non-objectifiable but also non-existent, has won out over the frame of reference which the New Testament authors had. Thereby,

essential sections of the Resurrection kerygma have been lost—not only the facticity in space and time, but also further intentions of the New Testament message. Bultmann only accepts (and *can* only accept) an action of Jesus Christ upon His disciples, and that an indirect action in the form of an aftereffect over and beyond his death. But he cannot accept an action of God upon Jesus Christ which takes place independent of our perceiving subjectivity: the deed of Resurrection, the miracle of the third day, the acknowledgment of His Son. All that Bultmann can still accept are the postulates which the person who had been together with Him who walked on earth would feel constrained to posit after His death. Such a postulate would state that Jesus of Nazareth could not remain dead. This perhaps subconsciously existing postulate (for good reasons we must express ourselves psychoanalytically!) filters into the productive imagination, then manifests itself as visions, and then, as in Paul, ascends into the sphere of theological reflection.

The New Testament witnesses, however, want to have the event on the third day understood as an action wrought by God. They do not establish God's deed by simply stating that it happened. They put it in a much more impressive and more indirect way: they refer to the doubt and despair of the disciples who were left behind at Golgotha, which is as much as saying there was neither spiritual nor psychic potential present which would have been capable of formulating such postulates. The encounter with the Resurrected One takes place in spite of all postulates, it occurs as the shock of something absolutely

unexpected, something not to be believed. It is this situation above all which testifies to the action of God in and through His Son. For God's deed never rests upon the level of our postulates; but in spite of them and against them, it emerges as the astonishing expression of His will and of His higher thoughts, which cut across our thoughts.

VI. *The vision hypothesis recognizes only the relationship between Christ and man, but not the relationship between God and Christ*

The vision hypothesis disputes this essential theologumenon: the significance of the Easter story rests in God's action in and through His Son. Such action cannot even occur on the horizon of the vision hypothesis. It is necessary to see this in order to understand the other major shortcoming: this hypothesis disputes the facticity of the Resurrection, its character as an event in space and time. This hypothesis is based upon the thesis that what is not objectifiable cannot exist objectively and ontically. Both these rejected points are mutually dependent: the action of God in and through His Son can only be expressed when it implies the effect of Resurrection, when it therefore incorporates the facticity of this event.

But as we said, historical-critical research cannot discuss such things. Only as anti-criticism is it fruitful. First of all, it can refute the attempt to understand the vision hypothesis as an adequate explanation for the "interim event" after the death of Jesus. This explanation's unambiguity (and its claim

to be so is the issue here!) is put in question because it does not supply all the answers—for instance, the answer to the question how the sudden transformation from deepest despair to the joy of Easter faith came to be. Secondly, anti-criticism can show that the vision hypothesis has to leave whole areas of the Easter faith completely out of the picture, above all the belief that God, quite beyond our capabilities of experience, has acted in and through Jesus Christ himself. Faith has to do not only with the relationship of Jesus Christ with us, but also with the relationship of God the Father to God the Son. In dogmatic terms, the faith has an inner-trinitarian dimension.

This argument has decisive anti-critical significance. For it is totally impossible to postulate that the event between God and his Son, if assumed, would lead to the conclusion, "therefore" God must have raised Him. It is clear that the thrust of the *conclusio* must be the reverse: the overwhelming encounter with the Resurrected One is what first led to the theological thesis that now (but only now, not earlier!) God must be praised for His marvelous deeds, because He has accomplished such a deed as this.

## VII. *The foundation which produces faith, and the reflection which faith produces*

We have now arrived at a position in our argument where it is possible to judge adequately why the Biblical witnesses emphasize so strongly and in so many different forms of expression the event-character of the Resurrection happening.

The forms of expression, as varied and contradictory as they may be in detail, acknowledge with different tongues one thing and reflect about this one thing in its fundamental significance.

And therewith I have taken a position in regard to a controversial point which occupied theology at the turn of the century, particularly that of Wilhelm Herrmann.<sup>26</sup> I am speaking of the differentiation between two things: (1) the foundation which produces faith, and (2) the reflection which faith produces, the development of dogmas expounding it and illustrating it. (I shall refer to these basic points as the "foundation" and the "reflection," from now on in this essay.) The latter element is subsequent to the former: "reflection" follows the "foundation." This distinction gains heightened significance in Christology and is a crucial issue in the Resurrection kerygma.<sup>27</sup>

The hermeneutical problems which occupy the existentialist interpreters today were to a certain extent anticipated by Herrmann when he distinguished between the "foundation" and the "reflection." (This line between Herrmann and his student, Bultmann, can also be traced historically and biographically.) The "foundation" is that which produces the certainty of faith, its indestructible basis; it is a reality which cannot be questioned nor undermined by intellectual reflection. The "reflection," on the other hand, comprises the conceptions and thoughts with which the believer personally expounds this "foundation," with the help of the intellectual inventory available to him. The "reflections" are therefore not only

secondary to the "foundation," but they are also and above all variable. For this inventory of conceptions and thoughts is of course subject to historical change. It can, for example—to refer to the analogy with Bultmann—be the inventory of myth, logos, and certain world-view conceptions. Such "reflections" are obviously relative, while the "foundation" is evidently absolute.

The distinction between the "foundation" and "reflection" leads to the task of examining every paragraph of Christian dogmatics in order to determine to which side of this distinction it should be assigned. For example, is the Resurrection part of the foundation which produces faith? Or is it only a subsequent form of reflection or visual conception produced by faith's *real* basis? Herrmann's answer is along the lines of the latter choice. We must briefly examine how he comes to this conclusion.

Like the representatives of existentialist exegesis, Herrmann suffers under the problem that the content of our proclamation is not verifiable, because it transcends the objective reaches of our experience. Kant's epistemological limits to possible human experience—it must be objectifiable, generally valid, and verifiable—remain insuperable. Yet this is a very depressing problem, because the faith is continually referring to non-verifiable facts of this sort. Faith stands in danger of suppressing the concept of truth which Kant imposed upon our intellectual frame of reference—by doing that, faith would surrender its intellectual integrity.

This attempt to base faith on objective and tangible facts

is questionable not only from the perspective of epistemology. Herrmann is also conscious of the expanding reach of historical criticism (practiced in the name of this epistemology), which threatens to undermine even more seriously every historical assurance about the facts which base the faith. His query: where is the *rocher de bronce* of evidence which cannot be undermined nor questioned any more?

As Kant's disciple, Herrmann can only conclude that this evidence cannot be found in objective reality, but only in the realm which Kant relegates to the competence of practical reason. This realm comprises the experience of personal, human reality, or as we would put it today: the experience of human existence. Christian dogmatics must be interpreted in terms of this experience—it must be interpreted "existentially."

And where do I find this realm in the world of the New Testament and in its message? I find it in the encounter with the person, Jesus. All attention is drawn to what Herrmann terms the "inner life of Jesus." When I encounter this inner life, I experience a spiritual-ethical power through whose touch I am exalted to a unique, true, and inwardly self-reliant life.<sup>28</sup> This experience of my own personal resurrection is the criterion for my having reached that *rocher de bronce* of the irreproachable. It is the only place of possible certainty. The experience of the power of salvation is mine here. In the *Dogmatik* (§45) he states in this connection: "That Jesus Christ has the power to save us can only mean that the reality of His person experienced by us now persuades us as nothing else can that God does take an interest in us." To interpret

this sentence, it is important to note that the degree of Jesus' personal reality—that which can legitimately become this foundation which produces faith—is determined by its capacity to become contemporary with me, to come into direct relationship to my experience here and now. Jesus' relationship to God is the example for my own relationship to God. It can be reproduced. I "experience" it as I am led through the encounter with Jesus Christ to my own encounter with God.<sup>29</sup> In that Jesus Christ is the living security, the representation of the love of God, He cannot be merely something in the past, rather He is the revelation of this love which is revealing itself to me. That is why the inner life of Jesus, which is in perfect harmony with the Father, is a *praesens* and no *praeteritum*; that is why it is not just any kind of revelation, rather it is *the* revelation.

I have attempted to sketch briefly what, for Herrmann, is the foundation which produces a personally valid faith. The reflection which this faith produces can only be expanded upon this "foundation." Whoever wants to have the "reflection" first, without having the "foundation," is beginning at the wrong end. He wants the conclusion before he has the premises at his disposal. So, for example, whoever has not yet had this personal, ultimate experience with the inner life of Jesus and still wants to work with the terms "Son of God" or "substitutionary suffering" is out of turn and susceptible to the temptation to work with his own speculative ideas.<sup>30</sup> He must pass through this ultimate experience and come into possession of the "foundation," before he can discover the

lines which lead to the "reflection"! Of course, once he is this far, he may then formulate his "reflections" differently than tradition has done: Herrmann himself modified traditional dogmatics considerably.

This is especially important and relevant for the Resurrection faith. It cannot, as stated, be the "foundation," because it is not verifiable due to its supernatural event-character. Besides, from a study of the historical situation and facts surrounding this event, it is no longer ascertainable from the Bible what actually happened at Easter. Not that this is tragic. For the person who has experienced the inner life of Jesus has received the certainty that Jesus Christ is alive, that He is present. "The disciples must have said to themselves afterwards that even without the appearances, they would have acquired the certainty based on what they had earlier received (through the encounter with Jesus and His inner life) that for Jesus, death was the perfection, not the destruction, of His obedience."<sup>31</sup> It is manifestly clear that here "reflection" is only the consequence of the "foundation," that one can develop such "reflection" by one's self, and that merely historical confirmations—like the Easter miracle—are not required at all. On the basis of personal experience, faith finds itself driven to the persuasion that Jesus did not remain dead.

Of course, in spite of its "foundation," faith is continually threatened. It almost succumbs in face of the consequences which it must draw, and the "reflection" does not keep up, so to speak. So Herrmann finds the appearances of the Resurrected One a kind of special aid in drawing these conse-

quences.<sup>32</sup> Just as the disciples, we need this special aid. What the appearances meant to the disciples is for us the assurance that it is in these experiences of the Exalted and Contemporary Lord that the Christian Church is founded. It is a kind of divine special aid which we share when we reflect about the same faith. However, in spite of this divine *cooperatio*, the subordination of the "reflection" to the "foundation" remains, the subordination of the Resurrection kerygma to the first experiences of the Church remains, for it is this experience, which results from the encounter with the inner life of Jesus, which mediates the evidence of faith and its later reflective form.

This may seem to be a highly attractive conception. Here faith is freed from its conflict with epistemology and thereby from its conflict with theoretical reason and historical experience. Here an apparently unobstructed pathway to the verifiability of faith's "foundation" is marked out, in which the "foundation" is no longer a supernatural "outsider" within the objective world of mere history, but a dimension, the "existence" of Jesus, which can be personally experienced. Everything else is relegated to the level of "reflection," which can then be relativized and demythicized.

The obvious question now: is this construction tenable, which distinguishes between the "foundation" which produces faith and the "reflection" which faith produces, and then subsequently relates them again?

It is manifestly clear that were one to confront the New Testament witnesses with the alternative "foundation" and

"reflection," they would doubtlessly place the Resurrection event on the side of the ontic "foundation" which produces faith. After all, *their* encounter with the "inner life of Jesus" (if we may permit—a little guiltily—these modern and psychologizing terms), even their encounter with his *exousia*, which permitted him to enact *terata* and *semeia*, ended abruptly in the darkness of Golgotha's despair. The history of Jesus with His disciples ceased here in its strictest sense. It was only continued as the history between God and His Son continued. The Resurrection was the light which broke into this darkness, against all postulates and every possible consequence which had been drawn. The Resurrection was certainly not understood as a divine "special aid" in the drawing of these consequences—assuming always that the first Christian witnesses could be interviewed with the help of the alternatives under discussion. For the disciples did not experience the Resurrection event as a clarification of what had been previously unclear, nor as the completion of what had been previously fragmentary and unsettled in their minds. It was a shock which cut across all their psychic dispositions.

But what is more important: they did not experience the event of the third day as a noetic event which helped them to interpret in its complete clarity what had been earlier suspected. On the contrary, for them it was an ontic event which objectively—and not just subjectively, in the sense of an illumination of understanding—made both the "outer" and "inner" life of Jesus meaningful. To put it in Kant's style (and with deference to Herrmann) one could formulate: for the dis-

ciples the sentence "Jesus lives" was no analytical judgment, no tautology of a higher order, which only confirmed what the encounter with Him who walked on earth had expressed anyway, or at least had implied and potentially expressed. No, it was a synthetic judgment, which incorporated the new factor—the Easter event—and which drew the conclusion from *both* the encounter with Him who walked on earth (for only those who had had this experience were witnesses of the Resurrection!) *and* the Easter event itself. Even if we accept Herrmann's thought that the new, true, and inwardly self-reliant life we feel is a guarantee that Jesus has the spiritual authority to effect this life, then we must add: the actual criterion which the believer has for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the experience of dying and rising again with him. But that is qualitatively more than what Herrmann means by the experience of inner self-reliance and new personal existence.

Does then the relation between "foundation" and "reflection" have to be discarded? In spite of everything, I would not assert this so radically. It is too complicated to permit a simple "yes" or "no." But perhaps this much can be said:

The relation is false when it is construed as in Herrmann: when the "reflection," to which the Resurrection kerygma belongs, emerges only in an analytical judgment. For it then deprives the Resurrection of its facticity, which for the New Testament witnesses is of supreme importance—and with good reason.

On the other hand, there is some validity here (you see, I

express myself very carefully!) when this relation is used to describe the noetic process which leads to the assurance of the Resurrection event. For this process begins at a level which leads through the encounter with the life, suffering, and death of Christ, which even leads through the encounter with the so-called "inner life of Jesus." All the witnesses of the Resurrection had begun with this encounter. No one set out on his way in faith to Christ with the Easter experience. That is their unanimous testimony. Therefore we must designate this pathway leading through the life of Jesus as prototypical.

We mean by that: also we, as late-born witnesses to the resurrected Kyrios, are in a situation where our way of faith does not begin with the Resurrection kerygma, but with the One who walked on earth, with His birth, His teaching, His deeds, His ministry, and finally His suffering and death.

In the language of preaching this means that faith always begins with that which happens on earth, simply because the Word became flesh and should be sought for in the flesh. As Luther said, we "cannot pull God deep enough into our flesh." Yet it is essential that the story of Him who walked on earth is already seen and described in the light of the Resurrection, that it is conceived with this end in view—this perspective too is basic to the development of our faith.

Then our faith must develop in analogy to the prototypical faith of the disciples.<sup>33</sup> The Resurrection kerygma must also shock the one who contemplates the suffering and death of Him who walked on earth, even if we cannot understand it psychologically and certainly cannot compare it psychologically

with the shock of the disciples. Aside from all other reasons, this is not possible, because we live in the context of our Christian heritage and know the Resurrection kerygma from childhood on, and because the light of the Resurrection, in whose radiance the story of Jesus' life is seen and described, provides a certain preparation for the event of the third day.

Yet even within the context of such a tradition there comes the moment (I trust that this will not be understood chronologically, nor that attempts to fix the moment be made!) in which the break between the earthly story of Jesus and His Easter exaltation must grasp us, when the Easter proclamation confronts us with the unavoidable question: are we to worship Him, or are we to reject Him, either by denying the report ("that can't be true") or by reinterpreting it to make it verifiable—as with the vision hypothesis.

The mere query whether the Easter gospel is "true" or not is a symptom of this existential shock, because this question indicates a growing perception of the break between the life of Him who walked on earth and the status of the Exalted One. And this shock of having to ask one's self takes place on the very basis of the contact with the Jesus of the Gospels. It is the Jesus of the Gospels who necessitates the question whether this Jesus, walking through the countryside, working deeds of power, preaching, and finally perishing on the cross, could be identical with the figure of the Exalted One who emerges in the Easter accounts.

At this point the analogy between then and now holds true: those late-born who have not encountered Him who walked

on earth cannot experience this shock. For them, the assertion that the cultic hero of the Christians came back to life is either a legend not worthy of discussion, or the mythical masquerade of a profound idea in D. F. Strauss's sense. Neither one is shocking, because reason is not affected by a legend unworthy of discussion, and the profound idea expressed here could also be produced rationally and therefore cannot be a contradiction shocking to reason. This is a confirmation of the statement that the disciples' faith, beginning with the earthly Jesus, is also a prototype for our faith: we too can react to the discontinuity between Christ's earthly life and the exaltation (even if only with the doubting question whether the Resurrection kerygma is "true"), if we have begun with the earthly Jesus.

Everything depends upon seeing this discontinuity, upon being subjected to this shock. Whoever passes it over and does not experience this subjective shock during his faith's growth, this shock that corresponds to the ontic discontinuity just mentioned, has never been confronted with the facticity of the Resurrection. To be more exact: he has never faced God's "action" in and through His Son, which as God's action, as history effected by Him, always possesses the signature of contingency and thereby confounds us as it cuts across our expectations, our programs, and our postulates.

Cutting across in this fashion is part of the "style" of divine action. Where man, like the false prophets, figures on salvation, judgment consumes him. Where man, like Job, reckons with the foreseeable balance between guilt and punishment,

service and reward, God does the unforeseeable thing and casts such pseudo-faith into extreme ordeals. Where man, like Israel, counts on a Messiah who as king will revolutionize the world order, God sends Him who was humiliated and shamed, and is *sub contrario absconditus*. The consequence to be drawn is brutally clear: so long as we do not suffer the shock of astonishment, we have not faced the contingent deed of God, the *brutum factum* of His decisions, and therewith the facticity of His action. As long as we think our belief is so unbroken, we are really moving on the level of our own postulates.

This holds true, I believe, of the pure and manageable "existentialist interpretation." As long as Easter is only a commentary on Golgotha for me, there are no breaks, as certainly as a good commentary relates to its text in an uninterrupted consensus. So it is highly characteristic that this school can only speak of an Easter *kerygma* but not of the *facticity* of an actual occurrence.

The same is true of the vision hypothesis. Visions can only be the confirmation of something already experienced. What is dreamed in a vision is related in unbroken continuity to what has been experienced earlier, which I recapitulate only in the dream and which is taken up here into my subconsciously productive fantasy. Visions are the punctual continuations of lines upon which I have moved in the real encounters of daytime consciousness. But in the Resurrection event we are not dealing with confirming visions but with contradictions of the postulates of human reason. These postu-

lates seek the living among the dead. And that is where He was sought. The women at the grave are postulating people who suffer this shock (Lk 24.1-5).

However, we are not dealing here with a pure, abstractly understood discontinuity. In my opinion the situation is more like this: our preformed conceptions, which are adapted to objective reality, are not adequate to comprehend the experience of this kind of reality. What we have long recognized about the subject-object relationship—that it is not adequate to explain redemptive-historical facts—should now also be recognized regarding the terms “continuity” and “discontinuity.” They cannot be used in a vacuum. Even Herrmann is in error—along with the Bultmann school—when he assumes a continuity between Him who walked on earth and the Exalted One, in the sense of an unbroken connection between the foundation which produces faith and the reflection which faith produces. But P. Althaus’ formulation is also dubious when he speaks here of a complete discontinuity. Both concepts are closely involved in each other.

The form of this involvement is exemplarily illuminated in the relationship of prophecy and fulfillment, and it seems to me that in this relationship an exact blueprint for the Connection and Division, for the Continuity and Discontinuity between the earthly and exalted Christ may be present. All fulfillments of prophecy are different from the prophecy itself—they transcend them. In the so-called Christ prophecies of the Old Testament, as they are cited in our Advent and Christmas pericopes, we have a prime example: Christmas

itself brings something new, something surpassing and also modifying. I need not delineate this in detail. We all know it. It is also true of the prophetic references to the Suffering Servant (Is 53). The normal Christian without theological training does not notice this, because he unknowingly does what the church does knowingly by placing these citations in the church calendar: he reads the Bible backwards, he reads the Old Testament as illuminated by the New. And a seamless continuity seems to result. But the theologian—who should be synonomous with the spiritually mature church—suffers the shock of astonishment when he sees the new element in this fulfillment, the surpassing and the modifying element. Putting it abstractly, he can be subject to the impression of complete discontinuity, exploding the scheme. On the other hand, the fact that the Old Testament can be read through the New Testament at all, that the possibility of such a naïve understanding of a continual and unbroken redemptive history is even conceivable—even in the form of an unallowable simplification—indicates that in retrospect the line of prophecy does point in the direction of its fulfillment.

Of course, our geometric picture, too, is immediately exploded. For whoever moved only along the prophetic line would arrive neither at the stable at Bethlehem nor at the empty grave. We see this illustrated in the Jewish exegetes of the Old Testament, for instance, in Martin Buber. Only the man who starts on this line and who is then confronted with the *new* events and with the *new events*, only he strides into a new *history* and then realizes in retrospect that this his-

tory had a prehistory, that the fulfillment had a prophecy. The New is not just new; the Otherness of fulfillment is not completely Other. But he who stands in the light of fulfillment knows more than the Prophet, whose only knowledge of the fulfillment is limited by His prophecy.

Everything depends upon where one stands within redemptive history, if we wish to test the validity of the prophecy-fulfillment scheme. The element of continuity which is present can only be recognized in retrospect. This is similarly true of eschatology: just as a man's biography—I think it was August Winnig who put it this way—can only be written from the point of his death, from the end of his life, and not from his birth, so can the biography of the world only be written from its end, from its eschaton. Looking back from the Day of Judgment we shall see continuities which are now invisible to our eyes. Then the road from the Fall to Judgment will appear as a straight line, while now we see the abrupt turns and detours of senselessness, or better, what appears to be senseless. One of the decisive differences between believing and seeing is that faith believes in spite of these detours and holds fast to the consistency of God, which cannot be objectified, whereas seeing will behold the continuity of the faithfulness of God in the continuity of events, the events of history which will be visible from the heights of the Day of Judgment.

The fulfillment of and in the Resurrection is something other than the prophetic life of Jesus, who walked on earth. This event is a *novum*, a surpassing experience, which shifts

His life on earth into another light and in this sense also provides a new commentary. Therewith the element of discontinuity has been expressed.

At the same time the disciples recognize in the light of the Resurrection the validity of the prophecy: the identity of the earthly and exalted Christ is made clear to them. The *ontic* background of this continuity is expressed in that the Resurrected One bears the nail wounds (Jn 20.20) and in that he recapitulates the Last Supper with His own (Lk 24.30). The *noetic* background is illuminated in that the Resurrected One opens the *nous* of the disciples and lets them recognize that there is a consensus between this event and the *graphai*, the Scriptures, and that this fulfillment does not fall outside the context of prophecy (Lk 24.25, 45).

The model for this dialectic of continuity and discontinuity, between prophecy and fulfillment, is located in the New Testament in the pericope about the conversation of the Resurrected One with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24.13-35). Both are here: first of all the experience of discontinuity—their eyes are closed, they do not recognize Him (v. 16). And they do not recognize (that is, they cannot "identify" the Resurrected One) because they are thinking along the line of their hope and the postulates which it has suggested to them: "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (he was *ho mellon lystrousthai ton Israel*, v. 21). The Exalted One refers them to the continuity with Scripture: *edēi pathein*—"Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer . . . ?" (v. 26). But this "necessity" is not ex-

pressed in the form of a postulate which could have been foreseen, rather it is made subsequently clear in that they encounter the One who went through suffering unto His exaltation. It becomes clear only through the self-revelation of the Resurrected One.

In this light, it is clear that the Last Supper was not a farewell meal, but that it was saturated with prophetic significance and that it pointed towards the coming communion with the Exalted One. This continuity too first "appears" as the Exalted One breaks the bread.

There is in this pericope even a psychological intimation about how the relationship of continuity and discontinuity is aligned in experience: after the encounter with the Resurrected One the disciples say to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us . . . ?" (v. 32). This reference to the *kardia kaiomenee* expresses then that the confrontation with the Resurrected One was not in its first stage just a negation of our hopes. It did not fall completely outside the coordinate network of our thinking, feeling, and willing, as the "completely other." It thrust itself *into* this network. He did not just cut across the line of our expectations, rather He returned again to this line. But our systems and schemes, which are aligned to the normal history and psychology we know, were not adequate to localize Him and to identify Him. We only noticed that our hearts burned. And that was an indication that something was thrusting itself into our soul with its hopes and fears. This indication of burning, this light deflection of our "geiger counter," was not enough to determine where its

stimulus came from. We heard bells ringing, but we did not know where they were. Our confrontation with the prophecy of Scripture and also with the prophesying life of Christ could not enable us to foresee their fulfillment. The colon after the prophecy left us helplessly behind. We could not construct the text of fulfilled reality, and where we did try to do so (by forming certain concrete ideas and hopes on the basis of this prophecy) we were led astray into a blind alley. Only when the Resurrected One revealed himself as the text of this fulfillment and personally put the period at the end could we grasp the context and, to a point, the continuity of the whole sentence, and begin to comprehend that the colon in the middle had both dividing and binding significance.

I think that it has been adequately illustrated why I feel it is so important that the Resurrection kerygma not be simply regarded as reflection which faith produces, resulting from the actual foundation which produces faith—where the encounter with the earthly Jesus is the “foundation.” In such a case, the Resurrection kerygma stands in perfect continuity to this “foundation.” We note even more clearly under the aspect of prophecy and fulfillment in which sense and to what degree the Resurrection of Christ is an experienced *novum*. Only in its happening, in its “entrance” (just as the Resurrected One “entered” the chambers of his disciples), is the old element in the prophecy surpassed and simultaneously illuminated, is it contrasted and at the same time absorbed.

Whoever lets his “history of faith” begin with the earthly Jesus, with the *logos en sarkos*, will find his heart burning.

This is not to be understood sentimentally. I mean this: when he really takes the "being-in-the-flesh" of Jesus Christ seriously, he will read the life of Jesus like a biography, or to be more precise, like a biography "among others." At most he may be biased enough to think that he has here a superlative example of *homo sapiens* before his eyes, a figure which only a few atheists, anti-Christians, and assorted other types have attacked, regardless of how much they may have berated the Church and Christians. Even Alfred Rosenberg, that confused and wild assailant of the cloth, said once in a sober moment that no one could ever prove that he had once attacked the figure of Jesus of Nazareth. As much as the bias for Jesus may be built up through such experiences, it cannot keep the reader of Jesus' life story from comparing this hero to other men. He will endeavor to understand Jesus' inner life and he will relate the love He practiced to that which he himself has experienced of love and has given of love. He will, in addition, probably examine this figure in the light of psychology. In that he does this and crosses out everything supernatural, from the virgin birth to the ascension, he lets Jesus be a complete, whole human. And therefore he should be allowed to continue in this fashion. As pastoral counselor I have often recommended this method to those who could not resolve their problems with dogma, and for intellectual reasons wanted to accept only those parts which they could touch and think and understand according to the laws of analogy. But precisely when they do this—and as I say they ought to do it!—they will

run face on into the nonunderstandable in that which falls outside every analogy.

Perhaps this experience is similar to the one which Albert Schweitzer reports in his research of the life of Jesus and its study: the *Leben Jesu* school sought the historical Jesus by stripping away all the dogmatic accretions, in order to penetrate to the real, historical core. But what they found then was not a man like us but an apocalyptic ghost, strange and estranging, incapable of binding our faith to itself.

Yet when we do have the experience of this analogy-lessness, we have reached the "real thing," we are as close as we can be to this prophetic life which found its fulfillment on the third day.

In this knowing-unknowing encounter with the ultimate truth, our hearts may burn. And that is exactly what happened with the disciples in Emmaus. The burning heart is no torch that shows us the way from prophecy to its fulfillment. If the Resurrected One had not kindled His light in Emmaus, then this torch of the heart would have only illumined the ruins of buried hopes, and He who had walked on earth would, in retrospect, have assumed phantom-like features. The burning of the heart, the deflection of the "geiger counter," which simply indicates the presence of other and even more unknown radiations, is not enough for orientation. We see that Albert Schweitzer, with the help of this burning, has not arrived at the empty grave, but that he has sought in other ways to resolve his problems with the estranging effect of this ghostly historical Jesus.

The prophecy, which I share in the experience of the analogy-lessness of Jesus, remains dumb if it is not given speech by the Resurrected One and if it does not appear in retrospect as one stage upon the way of this life. Prophecy taken alone is a dead-end street and a hopeless affair. Only when I am on the other side of the chasm do I recognize in looking back that I was drawn over a bridge, over the bridge of prophecy. Although I could not have foreseen that He would be standing on the other side, nor that He would have arrived there on the third day, still I would not have been drawn over the chasm if He were not really there.

## Notes

1. This monograph was delivered as the Edwin T. Dahlberg Lectures at Colgate Rochester Divinity School in October, 1963.

2. Translator's note: Most of the familiar stumbling blocks in translating German kerygmatic theology's terms have been treated in accordance with R. H. Fuller's translation of *Kerygma und Mythos* (H. W. Bartsch, ed.), which appeared in English in 1953 (London: S.P.C.K.); see especially pp. xi–xii in the English edition. Where possible, the somewhat artificial difference between historical (*historisch*) and historic (*geschichtlich*) has been clarified by the terms "mere history" and "significant history," in accordance with Bishop Stephen Neill's excellent suggestion. *Selbstverständnis* we have preferred to render "understanding of my own being," or self-interpretation. Further translation problems are noted in direct reference to the passages concerned.

3. Perhaps I should explain my differentiation between ontic and ontological: "ontic" means the reality of a thing or an event; "ontological" refers to the doctrine or discussion about this reality. The ontic question would be: What is reality? The ontological question would be: How do we recognize it?

4. Cf. the critical section on Karl Barth in my *Theologische Ethik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1951), I, §596a ff.

5. G. Wingren, *Die Predigt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), p. 156.

6. Cf., for example, Gerhard Ebeling, *Theologie und Verkündigung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1962), §162, p. 88.

7. Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in H. W. Bartsch, ed., *Kerygma and Myth*, trans. R. H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1953), p. 35.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 44 German edition, p. 38 English edition. [This quotation is translated directly from the German—Trans.]

9. *Ibid.*, p. 37 English edition.

10. The equal positioning of the redemptive-historic "once-happened" and the redemptive-historic "now happening" in faith is expressed most clearly in the treatise of the Tübingen Faculty of Protestant Theology, *Für und Wider die Theologie Bultmanns* (2d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1952), p. 32: "We are accustomed to distinguishing between the objectively given content of faith and the subjective act of faith. However, the more this distinction is considered the only relevant one, the greater the danger of basically mistaking what the Bible and the Reformation mean by faith. For this distinction gives rise to the impression that God's redemptive action, which is represented in our faith's content, stands over against the action of man, who in the act of faith subjectively appropriates this divine objective. Thereby, however, the very essence of faith would be reversed. For faith, in the New Testament, is the work of God in which God permits that which he did once and for all in Jesus Christ to become an event in and for me, here and now. As truly as the believer says, 'I believe,' he simultaneously confesses, 'I live, and yet not I, it is Christ who liveth in me.' This is a basic insight of the Reformation: faith is the deed of God in and for me now, the same deed wrought once and for all for me in Christ. Only in this most emphatic unity of faith and redemptive event is it possible to say that the justification of the sinner takes place through faith alone. 'Justification through Christ alone' means the same thing, because God's work in Christ cannot be separated from faith as the present enactment and actualization of this work, and vice versa, faith can just as little be separated from that unique deed of God in Christ."

11. Luther, WA 18,709-Cl 3,204,30.

12. See my exegesis of Rom 1.18ff, developed from this point of view, in *Theologie der Anfechtung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1949), particularly the chapter, "Kritik der natürlichen Theologie." The position here presented would also provide the first premises for the debate with the theological epistemology of W. Pannenberg, "Dogmatische

*Thesen zur Lehre von der Offenbarung*, in W. Pannenberg, ed., *Offenbarung als Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961).

13. The word "objectivity" is a charged term for many because of its use in the tradition of epistemology, where it is often understood to mean the condition of possible objectifiability. Whoever is disturbed by the term may replace it with the alternative, "transsubjectivity." In any event, "objectivity" is used here in this latter sense.

14. Exposition of the Second Article of Luther's Small Catechism, ". . . be my Lord."

15. Cf. the Lutheran doctrine of the *manducatio impiorum*.

16. Wingren, *Predigt*, p. 168.

17. Ernst Fuchs.

18. A significant break-through in the non-futuric eschatology of the Bultmann school seems to have been made by E. Käsemann. See his essay, "Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalyptik," *ZThK*, 1962, No. 3, pp. 257ff.

19. Hans von Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab* (Heidelberg: 1952).

20. Wingren, *Predigt*, p. 159.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Cf. Jacques Maritain, *Von der christlichen Philosophie* (1935), above all, pp. 80ff. Cf. also my discussion of the "Theologische Kritik der Vernunft," in my *Theologische Ethik*, vol. II, 1 §1321ff.

23. Cf. P. Althaus, *Die christliche Wahrheit* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann), II, 269.

24. Gerhard Ebeling, *Wort und Glaube* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1962), pp. 300f.

25. Bultmann, as quoted in the "Memorandum of the Confessing Church of Hesse" (HBK), quoted by me in *Kerygma and Myth*, p. 152.

26. On this particular question, Schleiermacher also developed a similar conception.

27. In Schleiermacher, cf. especially *Glaubenslehre*, §99 and 100,

1. "The facts of the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ . . .

cannot be posited as essential [!] components of the doctrine of His person."

28. Wilhelm Herrmann: *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923), pp. 325, 318ff; *Dogmatik* (Gotha-Stuttgart: Perthes, 1925), p. 83, *passim*; *Ethik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921), §20, *passim*.

29. Herrmann, *Dogmatik*, p. 84.

30. Herrmann: *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, p. 293; *Der Verkehr des Christen mit Gott* (Stuttgart and Berlin: Cotta, 1908), p. 11.

31. G. Koch, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959), p. 95.

32. One might think of Lessing here with his somewhat related position in the *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechtes*: reason (with Lessing, it is not faith!) would have arrived on its own at the truths mediated by revelation, but revelation has served this developing knowledge of reason as an (accelerating) pace setter. Cf. my book, *Offenbarung, Vernunft und Existenz: Studien zur Religionsphilosophie Lessings* (3d ed.; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1957).

33. In this context it may be noted that faith itself has a multi-dimensional development: (1) Luther speaks of the growth of faith and the righteousness of faith appropriate to it (cf. the chapter, "Das Zugleich als Kampf und Fortschritt des neuen Lebens," in R. Herrmann, *Luthers These "Gerecht und Sünder Zugleich"* [1930], pp. 234ff) and can speak of a *magis et magis justus fieri*; (2) the New Testament also contains such references, e.g., 2 Cor 9.10; Eph 4.15; Col 1.11; 2 Peter 3.18; 1 Cor 15.58; 2 Thess 1.3; and others; (3) the growing quality of faith is also demonstrated in that we learn gradually to apply the faith to all areas of our life, that it, so to speak, radiates out from the heart in circulation to all the extremities. This is why the basic commandment of love is always divided into the plurality of individual commandments, especially in the framework of parnetics.

## The Easter Sermon

*by Hans-Rudolf Müller-Schwefe*

It is said that just a few weeks before his death Hans Iwand was discussing the Resurrection with his faculty colleagues. When the New Testament scholars referred especially to the difficulties bound up with the texts concerning the Resurrection, he allegedly rose to his feet and indignantly exclaimed: "How dare you say anything of the kind in my presence? I have looked into the light of the Resurrection; I know what I believe."

No doubt the Gordian knot can be cut with such an understandable outbreak adduced as evidence. But this does not resolve the problem; rather the problem is for the first time made visible. How do the uncertainty of an exegetic fact and the certainty of preaching the Gospel relate to each other?

This question arises not only in connection with the Resurrection of the Lord. Every fragment of the life of Jesus must first of all be investigated in relation to the historical facts of the case. Here there exists only an historical certainty, which always means a relative certainty.<sup>1</sup> This still decides nothing. Why and to what extent is that which is stressed—for example, Jesus' partaking of a meal with the publican Matthew (Mt

9.9-13)—significant for us today, insofar as it preaches the Gospel, and preaches it as a certainty? For with Jesus Christ—as with the Revelation as a whole—it is not a question of general human truth but of historical actuality. Precisely that which did occur should have a meaning for us, for all history. For this purpose to be accomplished the event must be preached. It first acquires full and complete dimensions by being preached.

The culmination of this interconnection is to be found in the Easter story. Paul can say: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins (1 Cor 15.17). Actually this means: whatever is said about Jesus Christ—with historical certainty, which is the concern of the exegete—can on that account become actual for us only in the mode of the preaching, for Jesus Christ is risen. Only the Resurrection makes proclaimable the life of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Hence the Resurrection is a fulcrum. On the one hand, it is the final event in the life of Jesus with His disciples. The exegete and historian, therefore, must try to extol the fact. Though still concentrating as much as possible on the event, they must try to do everything in their power to determine the relative historical actuality. At the same time, however, it becomes clear in the very sources available to the historian and exegete that the event of the life of Jesus as such does not rest on an historical event. Nor does it exhaust itself. Rather, it aims to become God's Word to us. Jesus' Resurrection is that dimension in which the historical actuality of

Jesus is canceled. And it can be preached for this very reason; the reality of God is present in it.

Thus Jesus' mission is fulfilled in the Resurrection. This mission consists precisely in the fact that He is the Word of God to creation. We can neither detach preaching from the factual aspects of His life, death, and resurrection nor, conversely, can we isolate the matter of fact from the sermon, which becomes the "linguistic event." To express it theologically: the Resurrection is to be understood eschatologically. In it Jesus Christ, as the Word of God become flesh, arrived at the goal. He completely becomes the Word that sets our own lives in motion towards the same goal.

Thus the actual difficulty lies in our understanding. Obviously, it would signify setting truth on its head were we to assert that the Resurrection must be capable of being understood because supposedly it is indeed true. Fundamentally, the Resurrection surpasses our understanding; it is preached as the deed and word of God "in season and out of season." Its purpose is to be proclaimed, whether or not the community and its theology understands much or little about it. We are held together in our congregations and we remain close to each other in the church not because all of us understand the Resurrection in the same way and according to the same theology, but because the Resurrection is preached as the deed of God. The sermon can and must say more than what we comprehend. At the same time it is also true that we are challenged to comprehend that which is preached. This is so not

only because our comprehension is set free through God's Revelation; it is due also to the fact that we are by nature predisposed to comprehending. We begin by questioning and observing. And for this very reason we need to undergo the experience of change and transformation, the change to a new life.

Thus the problem of the Easter sermon is circular in character. We are reached by the Resurrected One in the living preaching of the church. He addresses His mighty word of creation to us, which calls us to a new life. He does this as the One who Himself was placed in the New Creation by God. But even this efficacious preaching is constantly accompanied by history. Perhaps we ought to say louder and more clearly that history preaches. Because this is so, whenever we preach, the historical locus always becomes an object of our inquiry. But if we inquire, we are led beyond history by the historical itself. Not into a sphere beyond history or into a general sphere that lies at the base of all history, but, rather, we are led to its fulfillment, to the harvest, to the New World.

## I

As theologians we must not look for the solution of the problem at Easter in the wrong place. It cannot be a question of our verifying the Resurrection as a pure *objektivum*. Conversely, the fact that it can be ours only through the testimony of eyewitnesses does not a priori constitute an

objection against its actualness. For in our day the concept of reality in philosophy is not merely pragmatic. Nor is it merely sensualistic, idealistic, or subjective. On the contrary, it is historical in the strict sense of the word. Roughly expressed, science up to the turn of the century was able to work with a concept of reality in which the real, the objective, the material was in time and space. Consequently, all subjectiveness is but arbitrariness, trimming, which has to be overcome. The historical is the real which can materially be ascertained as a fact. The task is to get at the events themselves which lie behind the sources.

But the concept of reality cannot be confined. It drives above and beyond itself. Natural science was forced to realize that all description of matter and structure leads to contradictions. They can be removed only if the subject who is observing the object is recognized as an indispensable factor of the relation. The nature of light, for example, cannot be described objectively; its reality is experienced and interpreted as a wave or as a corpuscle by the subject. This means that reality is never only mere materiality. This kind of reality is an abstraction. Rather, it is an indissoluble relation between subject and object.

Applied to our view of history this means, for example, that we have not grasped historical reality when we establish that Luther nailed his theses on the door of the castle church of Wittenberg on October 31. The historical reality is grasped only when we view and conceive this act together with

Luther's inducements to his actions and what he accomplished thereby. In this sense history is not a collection of objective events, but the understanding of human actions.

But this concept of reality must undergo still further correction. For it is apparent that the subject-object relation is itself not an ultimate datum. Rather, it is experienced as a fate, as a constellation which is historical in the authentic sense of the word. The subject is juxtaposed against the object and the object against the "focus." The relation is experienced as fate. Hence we can no longer speak "objectively," once and for all time, concerning reality in the old sense of this word. Rather, we can only report on reality as a history. Martin Heidegger has most clearly described the "fate" character of reality, namely, that all being is time. Even the logical positivist, Wittgenstein, was compelled to recognize that nothing can be explained "accurately" in the sense of logic, i.e., mathematically exact and free of contradiction. Reality can only be "narrated."

Thus the relation between history and nature is reversed. No doubt natural science is and remains the exact science and historical science the inexact science. But this does not mean that the less one speaks of reality, the less one achieves exactness in terms of classical logic. Rather, precisely the reverse is true: the exactness of natural science is the result of a colossal effort on the part of man to abstract himself from history and his entanglement in it. By so doing man does not, for instance, remove the complexity of reality. Scientific observation of the world is rather a way and manner of life by

which man fulfills his fate in this world with the utmost consistency. Reality asserts and fulfills itself as fate in the establishment of the mere numerical relationship of the real.

These preliminary considerations should first of all prevent theology from adapting its apologetics to a concept of reality which is not and cannot be upheld by science and philosophy themselves. Indeed, it can even be shown that this concept of reality is also historical, in that it emerged in human history for the first time after Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, it should also be clear that we are certainly grateful that science itself has deepened its understanding of reality. Theology's task, however, is not dependent upon science. Nevertheless, the means with which theology tries to express and understand the ground of faith have actually been acquired in connection with philosophy and history.

## II

If we now turn to the exegetical approach to the Resurrection, we first of all come upon efforts to sift the fact of the Resurrection from the texts. The procedure adopted tends thereby to lean more to either the critical or the conservative side. The conservative school believes that it can establish the fact that we draw very close to the event itself with Paul's account in 1 Cor 15. It is also of the opinion that it must depict the account of the empty tomb according to the standards of historical criticism. And it adduces good arguments in attempt-

ing to prove the authenticity of the Resurrection accounts. It asserts, for example, that the women as witnesses of the Resurrection could not be an invention.

The opponents of this conservative school argue on the same plane, namely, the plane of materiality and objectivity. They arrive at directly opposite conclusions only because they posit a generally recognized standard of objectivity and facticity which *they* apply to the Gospel accounts. The consequent result then is the following: these accounts of a Resurrection cannot be referring to facts; therefore, for understandable reasons, they are invented in order to express the faith of the community.

Moreover, both schools, arguing on this plane of objectivity and facticity, suffer from their naïve picture of reality, a picture no longer considered adequate in science. They take no account of the subject-object relation. Neither do they grasp the fact that a new creation occurs and is proclaimed in the Resurrection.

Hence we must not criticize the individual results of historical-critical research, but its premise. Thus Thielicke rightly asserts that only an anti-criticism of this criticism is possible. Whoever tries to oppose this criticism merely with assertions of other facts is shooting too short of the mark.

New Testament research itself now recognizes that the historical-critical formulation of the question is no longer adequate. It has been forced to observe in the sources themselves that it is impossible and not in keeping with the texts to aim at an apprehension of an objective fact behind the attestations.

For the witnesses speak of events in which the subjects were entangled.

Hence exegesis discovered the subjectivity of the witnesses. It inquired about the "place in life" of the statements. This was a progressive step forward. For now one could hearken to the sources without doing violence to them by a wrong formulation of the question.

The question of historical form first of all makes the rider fall on the other side of the horse. If the historical-critical researcher has neglected the one pole, namely the subject, as opposed to the object, the form-historian looks for his salvation in the opposite direction. According to him, the texts are comprehended if we understand them to be the expression of a subject or the expression of an encounter between subject and subject.

The theses underlying such an inquiry could consequently appear to be wholly destructive. The result of the inquiry would then be that nothing at all actually happened in the corporeal, objective reality. The appearances were only a matter of visions. After the impression they had received of the life and death of Jesus the disciples could not just stand still. They had to express what they believed, namely, that their Lord lives. And they were right to do so, for Jesus was the Messenger of God who came out of eternity and returned to eternity. Naturally, the witnesses expressed their faith in forms that were available to them as men of their time. They spoke in objective terms of Him who nevertheless transcended all objectiveness, precisely in terms of transient actuality.

Rudolf Bultmann represents this conception in an especially unadulterated state. Indeed, for him the extension of reality in time and space shrinks to a mere "that." Only "significance" is important and real. Here Bultmann's basic conception coincides with that of the early Karl Barth. God is not an object. Even His Revelation is not of an objective character. Rather, it proves itself as the crisis of all objectiveness. Hence for Bultmann the Cross is pushed to the center of the Christian faith. This involves the fact that Jesus Christ set Himself free from the world, its ordering and governance, and threw Himself completely upon God and the non-mundane. To the extent that God Himself acts in Jesus on the Cross, Bultmann adduces the following: he who relies upon the Lord, and not on the world and its dispositions, shall be saved by God, not for and in this bodily life, but for and in eternity.

The message of the Resurrection according to Bultmann must also be understood on the basis of this conception. The Resurrection, consequently, is not something that is experienced by the subject-object relation (or by the objective character of facticity). It can be an experience only in the sphere of human inwardness: the subject experiences that God saves precisely in the shattering of the objective world leading to life, to a non-mundane life. In this sense Bultmann asserts: "Can talk of the Resurrection of Christ be anything other than the expression of the significance of the Cross?"<sup>3</sup> And in the same context, he states: "Indeed, faith in the Resurrection is nothing else but faith in the Cross as a redemptive event."<sup>4</sup> By this Bultmann does not perhaps mean, as the old liberal school did,

that the Easter faith is presumably a mere invention of the disciples. On the contrary, it is an encounter with Jesus as the Revealer of God. But this very encounter took place on the Cross, as the overcoming of all mundaneness and materiality.

Naturally, the attractiveness of this solution lies in the fact that with it all the difficulties which crop up in connection with the utterances of the first witnesses vanish with one stroke. Faith in the Resurrection is faith in the Cross as a redemptive event. And all the different accounts can be understood as the expression of faith in the non-mundane, in eternal life. Indeed, their aim is to be so understood.

At this point the roots of the existentialist interpretation in German idealism proves to be fateful. Only the spirit, only the interpretation of my own being (i.e., self-understanding) is reality in the authentic sense. Concrete actuality is only matter in which the spirit becomes visible as in a resistance. The co-joined subject-object relation is understood not as creation, but as an absolute subject in terms of God. For God alone can be the Living One, in that He shows Himself as a subject in an object. New life then signifies life as a subject without the support of a material thing, an object. Only when God is viewed as the creator of the subject-object relation can it be asserted that the Resurrection does not signify a reality in the consciousness, in the spirit. Rather, it is a redemption of the subject-object relation through transitoriness.

This abridgment, which is peculiar to form-history exegesis of the Resurrection texts, developed its own resolutions. Because proper exegesis takes the witnesses seriously, form-history

had to encounter the fact that at least the first witnesses believed that God had acted on the body and not only on the spirit, on the material form and not only on the self-consciousness. This becomes clear in, for instance, Gerhard Ebeling's remarks: Though the form-historian speaks of "preaching and theological tendencies," he is, nevertheless, eventually compelled to admit that not only the Cross but also the Easter appearances are in a manner historical.<sup>5</sup>

At bottom, of course, for Ebeling too, the appearance of the Resurrected One is superfluous. From the point of view of authenticity it is even a hindrance to faith. Hence he says: "The attestation is grounded not in the appearances as such but in faith."<sup>6</sup> And faith is precisely faith in the Cross as a redemptive event. "In the sight of the Crucified One, this Crucified One, and indeed of His witness to the faith fulfilling itself in the act of dying, to believe *eo ipso* means to profess the omnipotence of God. And this means to profess the omnipotence of the God who awakens the dead."<sup>7</sup>

There are two reasons for the dilemma discernible here. Even the form-historian cannot preserve the purity of the faith. And if the idealistic schema is correct, namely, that the subject-aspect is the authentic reality and the object-aspect is secondary, it necessarily follows: the essence of faith, of exceptional subjectivity, can emerge only at the very site where the external reality, reality as object, shatters. Consequently, in this moment Jesus is the witness of faith in God; consequently, the faith of man can be enkindled only at this site. Consequently, too, the appearances of the Resurrected One are not to be denied. They

are to be viewed as a troublesome scoria, as in part the invention of the community.

This, however, is not the picture of reality maintained by Holy Scripture. It is not even that maintained by our time. For Holy Scripture, the opposition between subject and object is not contingent on the concept that the subject must free himself from the objective world and believe, i.e., trust in the non-objective world. Rather, man is body. As far as I am concerned, he is a relation of body to soul, a relation of materiality and consciousness, but a relation effected in such a manner that faith does not cast off the bodily contingency but receives it as a gift. Consequently, the question is not that Jesus on the Cross, as subject, adheres to and believes in God and that this is the substance of His faith. Nor is it that man, despite the transiency of the body, lives as subject. Rather, the question is that Jesus wholly surrenders Himself into the hands of God and believes that God will raise Him from the dead, precisely as a subject-object relation, as body. Only then is the nature of Jesus' faith on the Cross made clear. And only then will the Resurrection be understood in a manner corresponding to that of its witnesses: as the miracle of the new world, the new corporeality.

Only on this basis can the faith of the witnesses be rightly grasped. The miracle of Revelation in Jesus does not lie in the fact that He teaches us faith in God without the crutches of the existent reality, otherwise expressed materiality, so that thereby we too may learn the faith. The miracle of the Revelation lies in the descent of God into our human life: into mortal

corporeality. Faith should and can be enkindled precisely in this corporeal presence of the Lord: it is His very giving of Himself to us in our existence that we should trust and, on that account, learn from it how to give ourselves over to God in this our bodily life. For the Cross can be rightly understood only in connection with, and in the terms of, the Resurrection.

What then does the Resurrection mean? It is the sign of God indicating that this corporeality has a future. The dimension of Easter is not the "non-mundane" in the sense of the latter-day idealist Bultmann, but the new corporeality. It shows itself as a vanishing point of reality, of reality as a fate that God sends. It is a reality of faith, because Jesus Christ alone discloses it to us by accepting the "nay" which God pronounced on our reality. For we may trust Him who accepts and experiences death for us not only in its objective aspect but also as a judgment passed on the subject.

The Resurrection is a sign of God. The new life appears in the world as a sign in this bodily life, as a sign which man should trust. The *condescendentio dei* is fulfilled first in the *resurrectio*. Hence it can and must appear as a fragment of our reality. "Place your hand at my side. . . ." Nevertheless, it must at the same time be separated from our world by the distance of death! *Noli me tangere!* We must guard ourselves from burdening the sign-character of the Resurrected One with every contradiction in the witnesses. Fundamentally, however, the appearance of the Resurrected One belongs to both realms, the old and the new world. Thus the new creation appears in the old one.

Consequently, the actual contradiction is not between seeing (and touching) or believing, as we willingly interpret the story of doubting Thomas and adduce it as a key to the whole Easter event. Rather, it is much more a question of the Resurrected One appearing so that He may be believed in. It is precisely the appearance of the Lord that aims to lead to faith—its aim is to be accepted in faith.

This means that precisely the appearance of the Resurrected One is believed in as a sign that Jesus Christ is the beginning of the new creation. On the other hand, it also means that the appearance of the Lord can be perceived only through faith. The use of the words *θεάω* and *πιστεύω* in the Johannine Gospel speaks for this.

Summing up, then, Resurrection is not a fact which can or must be proved or refuted. Nor is Resurrection a deliverance of Christ from the factual and a passage into the Absolute, i.e., subjectivity delivered from objectivity, so that faith in this sense may emerge in contradistinction to seeing and touching. Rather, Resurrection is the sign, the appearance, in which Jesus Christ reveals Himself to the predetermined witnesses. Through it He wills to show them what they cannot infer by themselves or from the Cross as the judgment that has been pronounced upon men, that God through death has triumphed over death and that Jesus lives for them. Consequently, the Resurrection is the fulfillment of Jesus' fate. He has pushed through to life from death (from perishability). As the Resurrected One, Jesus had to reveal Himself to His disciples because they could not garner this truth from His life. It is the

appearance of the Resurrected One that first wholly interprets the life of the Lord to them. But they do not thereby become materialists and fundamentalists who regard future life, the future, in terms of the purely material. Rather, the appearance becomes a sign that they ought to believe. Passion is the way which God has determined. As the Resurrected One, He wills to be with them and to be their guide.

Among modern theologians, Hans Iwand and Paul Schutz have most clearly grasped this role of the Resurrected One. The former has understood that in Jesus' existence the Word preceded the materialization because God's Word became flesh in His existence. Hence he saw that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is a Word addressed to us which demands faith. As pure fact the life and death of Jesus, in its temporal extension, is of eternal importance. Through this Word He wills to promise each generation anew that He is there for us. He died for us and He lives for us. Thus it is precisely what is visible and audible in Jesus that has the character of promise. He is neither pure fact nor pure significance, but a fellowship which signifies the future and demands faith.

Paul Schutz discusses this character of promise in Jesus especially in connection with His Resurrection. The Resurrection discloses, finally and definitively, that Jesus' whole Being wills to be understood as a prophetic sign for us. The character of the prophetic sign consists in the fact that an action, for instance, the siege in Ezekiel, announces what God will do, so that this refers not only to possibilities but leads up to reality. Everything depends, then, upon man trusting this

sign as a mighty proclamation, as a promise of God. The sign proclaims the future and challenges faith. The life of Jesus Christ is condensed as a promise of God in the Resurrection. His whole life, suffering, and death come to a focus in the Resurrection. Resurrection becomes the climax of Jesus' existence. It becomes the sign of God: definitively God proclaims that He is finished with death because He is finished with sin. The Resurrected One becomes a prophetic sign to him who believes in the appearance of the Resurrected One. God's promise "I live and you shall also live," is fulfilled in Him.

But the life of Jesus is an historical phenomenon, whereas the appearance of the Resurrected One was experienced only by the chosen witnesses. What does this difference mean? It means that the proclamation of the historical Lord always precedes the appearance of the Resurrected One. The Resurrection is the climax of Jesus' life. But the Resurrection cannot be experienced without the life of Jesus.

It is not enough to understand the Resurrection as a prophetic sign as though the life of Jesus on the whole was a prophetic sign. Consequently, the "more," the plus of the Resurrection, must be designated more clearly. What does it consist of? The Resurrection is the breakthrough of the new reality which appears to the witnesses. It makes them certain of the vanishing point of the movement of Jesus' life.

Not only is it a prophetic sign in itself, promising Resurrection and demanding faith. It also is, simultaneously, the beginning of the new world. This breakthrough, in which the whole reality wherein we live sees its goal before its eyes, be-

comes at the same moment a sign, a challenge to believe. (Blessed are those who do not see and still believe.)

Citing the example of Paul, Ernst Fuchs has made an interesting attempt to clarify the relation between faith, seeing, and preaching. He rightly sees that Paul comes to the encounter with the Lord through preaching. "Hence the act of preaching precedes faith. How does the act of preaching relate to seeing? In Paul's case preaching also precedes his own seeing. Indeed, he had actually persecuted the ones who preached. Even though he too understood it in a new sense when he *did* see, he nevertheless understood it in such a manner that in the future he did not link preaching to seeing, but to faith."

But distinctions must still be made with Paul. The prerequisite for the encounter with the Resurrected One was that he hear the preaching of the disciples. The latter had lived with the Lord, but first began to preach the Word only after they had seen the Resurrected One and had been convinced by Him that He lives. Paul experienced something different from what the disciples had only in that he did not give himself to the proclamation but instead violently opposed it. Paul's conversion, the fact that he believed and himself became a witness, became even more radical than that of the disciples because through it the Resurrected One encountered him. A threefold conclusion follows therefrom:

1. The appearance of the Resurrected One presupposes the Proclamation of the Incarnate One.
2. The disciples bear witness to the Lord only after the appearance of the Resurrected One.

3. This commissioning of the disciples by the Resurrected One ushers in the age of the proclamation in which the preaching of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord becomes a mighty word through which men desire to encounter the Resurrected One and attain faith.

This third point still requires some further discussion. If the initial witnesses become His witnesses for the first time through the Resurrected One and His appearance, what about the next generation, to which the Resurrected One does not appear? It learns to believe in Him and experiences His mysterious presence through the preaching of His word.

Karl Barth<sup>8</sup> has interpreted the story of the appearance of Jesus before the disciples and Thomas in such a way that to him the words, "You believe because you have seen, blessed are those who do not see and still believe," are not a reproach of Thomas, but the distinction between two times. It was given once and for all to the first witnesses to see in order to believe. All later generations were to be blessed (as Thomas was through seeing) in that they see not but nevertheless hearken to those who have seen.

Paul's attitude speaks in favor of this conception. He himself had looked upon the Lord and had come to faith thereby. He is of the opinion, however, that his hearers come to the faith through his preaching by hearkening to the word of God (Rom 10).

By entering into the preaching the Resurrected One ushers in a new age: the age of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit

makes the Resurrected Lord present in the proclamation so that the community can live in His presence.

This truth is not fully treated by Karl Barth. He is so strongly under the impact of the nearness of God—for once and for all time—in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that after the forty days of the appearance of the Resurrected One the time of the Church breaks through as the time of the great indirectness. Now, each new generation has to LISTEN to the attestation of those who have LOOKED upon the Lord as the Resurrected One. But, compared to the directness of the eyewitnesses, this proclamation of the Resurrected One places the listener in an awkward indirectness. Thus, if it is *not* true that the Holy Spirit, as the gift of the Father and of the Son in the proclamation, makes the Resurrected One present, faith easily becomes a *fides historica*.

Thus the Lord also becomes present in the witness borne to the Resurrected One. It also occurs in the celebration of the Lord's Supper when the death of the Lord is *announced* in fulfillment of the prophetic sign. Hence the proclamation and sacrament are the place in which the Resurrected One wills to be newly present to every generation in order to draw it into His death and life.

If our description of the way along which the interpretation of the eyewitness accounts and the eyewitnesses themselves leads us has been correct, then, manifestly, every sermon which is delivered in the community of Jesus Christ is an Easter sermon. The texts themselves already show us this. For every statement concerning the life and death of Jesus is made in

the light of Easter. The Old Testament too can be rightly read and understood by Christians only in terms of Easter and in relation to Easter. This is pronouncedly the opinion of Luke's Gospel, and Matthew and John likewise share it. The other witnesses too are in agreement with them.

It follows that the primary task of our special sermon on the Easter event is not to conduct apologetics. Our task is not to prove the Resurrection, nor, for that matter, to weaken criticism of it. Our task is to preach the Resurrection of the Lord as the goal of creation, as its fulfillment and renewal, and to glorify it as such. Further, it is to preach to the world, God's beloved, that death is the wages of sin of a fallen creation and that Jesus Christ wills to take these wages along with Him through the Cross on the narrow path to Resurrection. Thus Creation is to be appealed to in relation to the promise of the Resurrection: it ought to be made new in Christ. This appeal must not apply only to the person of man as subject, but must direct itself to the body, to the subject-object relation. I shall state this even more plainly: if today we experience how man as subject transforms the world about him and fulfills his destiny therein, it follows that the message of the Resurrected One applies even to this world, which actualizes itself in the interplay of subject and object. Today we can hardly say that the Church has actually begun its task of preaching here. Nevertheless, only thus will the Church be obedient to the Resurrected One, and do her work in the world: to set everything in motion in a thrust towards Judgment Day.

## III

What the proclamation of the Church says is not independent of that which exegesis teaches. Naturally, it is not and should not be the case that only that which scientific exegesis allows and proposes as subjects for sermons can be preached. Much preaching—to its shame and harm—cannot justify its utterances on the basis of the text. Conversely, throughout the ages, much preaching contains more than the exegetes have either perceived or taught. On the one hand, one should pay attention to the flow of exegetical ideas which come down from the eminent theological faculties, because what science teaches has been preached in congregations for thirty years. On the other hand, progress is also made in confessional utterances that go above and beyond the knowledge of professional theology. And this “above and beyond” concerns not only such so-called practical applications as can and must befall only the practicing pastor in his congregation. It also consists of central perceptions, which can indeed come to the pastor as inspirations precisely through the life that he shares with the congregation. The Holy Spirit does not make use of academic minds alone in order to lead the congregation in full truth.

Nevertheless, there exists in general a close connection between what is taught in exegesis and what is preached, and also the manner of preaching. Thus the strength and weaknesses of exegesis become clearly visible in sermons, precisely because of their practical application to life.

All this naturally applies also to the Easter sermon under

discussion here. We can even follow the influence of exegesis in sermons, for example, since 1918. Here the possibilities for preaching Easter emerge with a more beautiful, as well as a more painful, clearness. It also becomes apparent that the message is made up of more than mere understanding. Easter is not the preaching of death. This means that the message constantly transcends our interpretation, and constantly fulfills itself in the sermon on the Resurrection of the Lord in a way that is more than we can utter. The Lord Himself announces Himself as the Resurrected One.

On the basis of such presuppositions we shall now make a few observations on Easter sermons. We shall quote some characteristic excerpts from sermons delivered and published since 1918, arranging their sequence according to the schema we used in outlining the path of exegesis.

1. It is immediately clear that the preacher fell into difficulties at the time the historical-critical formulation of the question in exegesis prevailed. What did the pastor preach to the congregation on Easter morning? To what kind of reality did the Resurrection belong? Orthodox pastors mounted their pulpits and defiantly preached a convincing, sturdy reality. They were especially fond of the scene of the empty tomb. Here they could give free rein to their eloquence. Nevertheless, we must be careful with our judgments on these orthodox sermons. The task of exegesis is to demolish an insufficient understanding in the historical-critical formulation of the question, which at that time remained mostly in a destructive state. When confronted by this destructive attitude, a pastor stayed

with the words of Scripture. Because these words transcend the understanding, there probably was more Easter in his sermon, which proclaimed the contradictory reality of the Resurrection, than in the liberal sermon in which the Resurrection was sublimated into a symbol of spiritual realities. Perhaps even the ring of unyielding professions of faith, indeed the stubbornness, must be viewed positively. The orthodox person is careful not to place anything at someone's disposal before he has received something better. Admittedly, this way of preaching merely preserved and protected and did not expose itself to the risk of loss of faith. Viewed in this light, the orthodox sermon in the age of natural science was a tilting against windmills.

Most preachers, however, could not endure the intellectual dishonesty in the *assertio* that was merely orthodox. They therefore had to attempt some kind of mediation between the account in Holy Scripture and contemporary thought. Consequently, they had to expend much energy in apologetic performance. As a result, the actual message was not fully treated. It then became a question of explaining how it is possible for one to rise from the dead. Different approaches were taken in order to make this intellectually plausible. Most sermons reflected the viewpoint of the dogmatics in which the preacher had made himself at home. Naturally, there was the contention that science, especially natural science—with all its assertions—remains on the borders of materiality, whereas the sphere of the subject and the reality beyond the borders remains the field of faith. Thus the Resurrection can be accepted either as a

personal reality or as a miracle beyond the borders of this material world. Respectable as were these attempts to come to terms with the scientific formulation of the question, the preacher nevertheless wore himself out in academic discussions of possibilities.

Others argued in terms of the Creation: He, who created the world and man, can also overcome death! On the Catholic side the apologetic sermon gladly utilized the old formulas of Greek philosophy. In Plato, moreover, the soul's destiny to immortality was discussed, and the possibility of resurrection was proved on that basis.<sup>9</sup>

One of Otto Dibelius' sermons offers an original method of remaining on the ground of reality and at the same time arguing beyond and above it. It has been his experience, he argued, that Christian men who are filled with Christ radiate. The light of the Resurrection radiates from them. Proceeding from effect to cause, he concluded *a minore ad majus*, "If the Lord is thus in His disciples, how then must He be in Himself?" As an indication of reality this premise is not bad. But it is not tenable. For the radiance of a Christian can also be understood in psychological terms. Furthermore, not all Christians radiate, like Kollwitz's Lord Baron. Paul Schutz argued in a similar vein in an earlier essay entitled, "Why I am still a Christian." He had been deeply impressed by the light in the face of dying peasants in Hesse. Nothing of what should be accomplished is accomplished by such argumentation. And in the end Otto Dibelius too arrives at the undefended but trenchant assertion: "We believe in our resurrection, because Christ

does not forsake us: even if a head leaves its member which he does not drag along with it."

The opposite is true of sermons which, like the historical-critical exegesis in this field, let the Resurrection be wholly dissolved in mundane realities, and then argued in purely elucidatory terms. Geyer, one of the two great Nuremberger *dioscuri* before the First World War, understood the Resurrection wholly as a subjective reality. By so doing he could make himself independent of all the achievements of science: "Our faith lives not from historical probability, but from certainties which cannot be shaken by anything that comes to us from the outside. Hence not even by the opinions and convictions of historians."<sup>10</sup> He interprets the injunction in 1 Cor 5.7-8 to purge the old leaven as a call "to the spring house cleaning of the heart." This type of sermon was effective, because it pleased the listener and coincided with his horizon of understanding—in this case the educated citizenry of Nuremberg. But it betrayed the message. Such a liberal sermon rings wholly hollow when Julius Burgraf in his "Goethe sermon" of 1913 extols the Resurrection entirely in inner-worldly terms as the mystery of the renewal of the soul's life through forgiveness: "the eyes are opened and man can see the miracle of this world."<sup>11</sup> Christ, therefore, returns in the great personalities, and also in the poets of the age. He is the power enabling one to behold life anew.

2. The great turning point also becomes visible in the history of the sermon which we discussed in connection with exegesis. The turning of exegesis to form-history was quite in

keeping with definite philosophical changes. It had been realized that all mundaneness is determined in its form not simply by the forces of this world, but by the fact that this world in its being begins from nothingness, from non-mundaneness. Thus the witnesses of the New Testament could be understood as moldings which had come into being under the pressure of non-mundane revelation.

The sermon was thus newly formulated in a wholly similar way. Karl Barth discovered the dialectic of time and eternity (of world and God). Under this aegis the texts of the New Testament began to speak anew with incomparable power and originality. The sermon became a commission to lend an ear to the witness of God's Revelation, in that the Revelation willed to be perceived as the wholly Other. Thus in Barth, for example, the story of doubting Thomas becomes the witness for that which we humans ourselves can in no way utter, and which in no case may be understood as miracle.

"To the end that we may have life in His name . . . His omnipotence, His hiddenness, and His actuality was required . . . there in the circle of those twelve apostles of God Himself. For which reason it was required that He perform miracles and erect His signs and make visible the borders between His life and nature and that of the creature, of man."<sup>12</sup> Thus, Barth postulated, God participates in this world in that He, as the Resurrected One, makes borders visible. And since it is a question of God's sovereignty, of the omnipotence of the Creator, every question about the "how" is idle and irrelevant in the deepest sense. We cannot overlook that here, in the authentic

pathos of experience, God makes Himself known as the wholly Other precisely in His Revelation and in the Resurrection. Nor can we overlook the fact that the violence of this breakthrough of eternity in time is authoritatively known. Now one can again really preach without any of the arts of apology. Now simply the authority of the matter, that is attested to by the witnesses, is pushed to the center.

We shall not be able to speak kindly of orthodoxy here. For it is precisely the materiality of Revelation that is of no interest at all. Rather, Barth's attitude, together with that of Bonhoeffer, can be called Revelation-positivism. Revelation is simply posited, because in the fire of existential encounter not only do the historical tombs between then and now melt away, but even the world in general comes to its ultimate frontier. Here, naturally, also lies the limitation of this manner of attesting to the Resurrection in the sermon. Once the continuity between God and His creation, which is the core of Revelation, is torn, the sermon can merely paraphrase what the witnesses themselves assert with authority. Thus when Karl Barth (as a Reformed theologian) prefers the homiletic form he is merely being consistent.<sup>13</sup>

But whatever the limitations in this manner of preaching the Resurrection as the Revelation of the wholly Other, the Rubicon has been crossed. Henceforth it will be a question of making clear in the Resurrection itself that which man himself cannot utter, that which bursts the possibilities and borders of this world. The kerygmatic sermon is the new style.

But now the new approach contains not only the possibility

of preaching dialectically, in the sense of the qualitative difference between time and eternity, and therefore of speaking with authority in terms of God. The movement can also be carried out conversely. In the text of the sermon and its form it can be made clear how the utterances have been qualified and stamped by God's Revelation. Consequently, the danger of speaking discontinuously and of introducing God's Revelation simply as the utterly alien is avoided. But then another danger crops up, perhaps an even greater one. Namely, that the Resurrection has only the reality of an utterance which is formed in terms of the non-mundane and which no longer concerns the body, the Creation as New Creation.

We find an example of this kind in Claus Westermann.<sup>14</sup> He explains the story of the disciples of Emmaus and shows how it is composed according to a formal basic model of Holy Scripture: man recognizes the encounter with the Lord only after it is over. "Did not our hearts burn?" is the theme of Easter. Thus we must understand Easter not as a revelation of God, but as the knowledge of the significance of the life of Jesus which came to its climax on the Cross. There can be no doubt that a sermon preached in this manner succeeds in making comprehensible to a modern listener how the light from Easter can come from the encounter with Jesus in His life. Nevertheless, the question of whether thereby only "the Lord of one's own spirit" comes to expression cannot be repressed. Are the witnesses of the Resurrection really of the opinion that Jesus preserves the halo of the Resurrection in the reflection of thought, in the afterglow of remembrance?

Is the essential dimension of the Resurrection attained, namely, the break-through achieved by way of death? This way of approaching the most concrete element of an event only in terms of form, thus abstractly, certainly pleases the intellect of the enlightened man. But it dissolves the reality of the Resurrection.

Gogarten did not succumb to this danger in a sermon on the Easter faith which was likewise highly formal and abstract.<sup>15</sup> Gogarten is, of course, a colleague of Bultmann. Like the latter, he too would like to demythologize the Easter utterances. He does not dare to introduce the actuality of the Resurrection simply as a reality, as does Karl Barth, without justifying it. Rather, he speaks of this life which has its border in death, and renounces all utterances beyond and above that which could be understood as material reality. Nevertheless, he leads the listener to an encounter with the Resurrected One with an amazing concentration. In addition, he even shows how death is perceived as a sin in terms of the Resurrection. We want to live without God, therefore we kill and therefore we die. At the same time he attests that the Resurrection is a work of God, because God is the God of the living and therefore Jesus could not remain in death, since He believes in God. Here the question must also be raised whether it suffices to speak of Jesus' faith in the manner of Schleiermacher. Thus the reality of the Resurrection is simply confirmed in the style of Karl Barth. Here too there is no hint whatsoever of the concrete, corporeal dimension of the Resurrection. Nor can it be otherwise under the prescriptions of form-history.

3. In our discussion of exegesis we described how the position of the existential interpretation in terms of two aspects was placed in question. Today even the reality can no longer be understood in the purely formal terms of the shaping power of the subject, but logically. That is, it can be understood only as the movement which combines and changes subject and object, understanding and matter. Consequently, the reality of Revelation will not be understood dialectically simply as the wholly Other or as the qualification of the subject towards a new understanding. It will be understood as the Word of the Creator that enters our whole reality and purposes to grasp at a new life through death.

Hence, in the sermon too, everything must now push beyond mere dialectics or mere formalism. Resurrection cannot be preached only as the utter Beyond, as the crossing of the border. Neither can it appear as the new understanding of this reality. Rather, it finds expression as the form of this reality, in which the concrete dying of Jesus Christ breaks through in the New Creation. As a result, He who has been resurrected from death becomes the concrete sign of the new reality.

In his systematic study, *Die Predigt*, G. Wingren expounds that all preaching, insofar as it is a proclamation of the Resurrected One, itself aims to be as active as the Resurrected One in the very words of the real Resurrection, namely, he who awakens from the dead and prepares the life for the world to come. If this is rightly seen, two possibilities exist for preaching on the subject of the Resurrection. Firstly, as an attestation

of the Resurrected One it can itself become the presence of the Resurrected One. He is present in the kerygma. Secondly, it can refer glorifyingly or instructively to the fact that the Lord wills to be present and effective as the Resurrected One in the sacraments, in baptism and communion.

Sommerauer decisively embarks upon the first way.<sup>16</sup> In his sermon on the pericope of the disciples at Emmaus he first of all wrestles with the question of how one may be able to understand and explain the Resurrection. Such an approach to the Resurrection, he argues, is presumably wrong and cannot lead to the goal. He then substantially develops the idea that only the Resurrection gives meaning to human suffering, and answers the question of how we can be certain that Christ has risen by calling upon us to accept Jesus in the sermon of today and in the study of Holy Scripture. "Talk with Him about it," says Sommerauer. Hence, certainty is not to be attained through objective confirmation, nor through the fact that I may gain a new understanding of myself, but only through the fact that I let myself "be entangled" in the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ by the narrative of the witnesses. And the preacher is only being consistent when in the end he understands his words as a benediction, i.e., as a petition to Jesus to come closer to the listener through the sermon.

Here full value is given to the fact that Christ wills to be present as the Resurrected One precisely in the proclamation of the Word in the age of the Holy Spirit. But has not the question of "facticity" been leaped over thereby? While the historical question is rejected, the reality of the *verbum externum*

is far from denied. Of course, problems still remain. How, for instance, can it be stated that the Resurrected One does not lie behind us, so that we must look back and become historians and archeologists, but that He stands before us, so that we may run up to Him and He may will to draw closer to us?

The other problem in Sommerauer's sermon that could not be understood according to the text under consideration is: how can we relevantly proclaim the cosmic significance of the Resurrection today? It was clear that this aspect of the existentialist interpreters and preachers had to be rejected. For the world of God, the world of the Resurrection, can only be non-mundane. If, however, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a word of God's creation, i.e., that flesh has become new body, then the Resurrection is of significance for the body, for the cosmos. (Perhaps, in order to dispel any misunderstandings, we should expressly stress that by body we do not understand matter, object, but the coordination of object and subject.)

This task is grasped only rarely in the sermons before us. Paul Tillich set himself this task in a very solid and meditative religious address on the interment of Jesus, "Born in the Grave."<sup>17</sup> He starts from the account related at the Nuremberg trials by a Jewish witness from Vilna. During the war this witness had lived in hiding in a grave in the Jewish cemetery of Vilna. A young woman in an adjoining grave gave birth. The gravedigger came, wrapped the infant in a shroud, and cradled him in his arms as he sang of the Messiah who can be born only in the grave. Tillich then reverses the image: the whole world is a grave, only the Messiah can rise from this grave.

This is no happy ending for the world, but a radical new life "the most astounding, deepest, and most paradoxical mystery of existence."<sup>18</sup>

The cosmic role of the Resurrected One is expressed positively in this sermon—in the medium of the image—without it becoming an impermissible myth. Indeed, the question is whether the Resurrected One is being honored when He is celebrated as "mystery of being." Such celebration no doubt arrives at the right conclusion, namely, that Christ's Resurrection concerns us not only as subject and self-consciousness. The word of God itself becomes a precursor, as it were, instead of the creation being understood as the Being of the word that creates.

The cosmic significance of the Resurrection of Christ is most clearly expressed in Steinwand. He expounds the old text of Mark 16 and in connection with it ventures to assert that Jesus Christ frees the whole world from the bonds of death and of sin, and thereby introduces a new day of creation. But only one who lives in the Eastern Church and in her forms of expression can speak in a great mythic language and combine it with a Lutheran understanding of sin and of death.

With these considerations we have already arrived at the second method by which the Resurrection can be equated with new creation: the Resurrected One is present in the sacrament.

It is evident that here Catholic preaching necessarily effects this equation. In his exposition of the Easter sermon from the Reformation to the present day, Bruno Dreher expressly remarks that in Catholic theology the Easter sermon, at least on

the second Easter day, should be a sermon on baptism. We may recall that from earliest times the Church has always celebrated Easter as the great day of baptism. Naturally, here too is hidden the problem of how the connection between Christ's death and Resurrection and our rebirth is to be understood. Here we must, for example, ask Bruno Dreher whether it is sufficient to speak of "cultic mystery" so that, to use Schier's words, the Word in its total sense as well as a Foreword is fulfilled in the sacrament. Consequently, the Easter sermon can only exalt the sacrament and invite us to it. Unfortunately, it is not possible to do so in this manner in connection with the Protestant conception of the sacrament. Possibly, however, the manner in which we understand the presence of the Resurrected One in the sacrament is a touchstone of our correct understanding of the presence of Christ in the Word.

According to our ordinances, unfortunately, the sermon text Rom 6.3–11 is prescribed only for the Sunday following Trinity, hence it bears no relation to Easter. Also, 1 Pet 1.3–11 is prescribed only after the second series of Epistles of *Quasimodogenito*. As a result, in the Easter sermons the link between Resurrection and baptism is barely preached.

Wilhelm Hahn, for example, has preached at Easter on the pericope.<sup>19</sup> But even he, who is suspected of being a strong sacramentalist,<sup>20</sup> though referring to baptism, immediately rectifies himself: "In order that the new Christ-life become efficacious, all that is required is that you place yourselves consciously and most joyfully with your whole life on the ground of your baptism." The situation is much better in

regard to the altar sacrament. The old *evangelium* for Easter Monday (Lk 24.13-35) authorizes preaching on this interconnection and it has also zealously been so understood.

Günter Jacob<sup>21</sup> expounds the journey to Emmaus for the embattled community in his diocese in Central Germany. When it grows dark, he says, "and the shades of night fall upon us," it is then that the Resurrected One gives us His fellowship. The outer situation remains the same, but Christ can then remain in it, borne by the joy of the encounter. Here the whole stress is laid upon inner change—perhaps in correspondence with the text. W. Trillhaas<sup>22</sup> approach is similar when he expounds history as heart-history.

Neither is there in this manner of preaching any allusion as to what is thereby given, namely, that the Resurrected One proffers fellowship in the manner of the Last Supper. This becomes clearer in Rudolf Bösinger<sup>23</sup> when in his otherwise exaggerated sermon, formulated in the terms of popular preaching (his title for the text is "The Imperishable Tryst"), he states, "We ourselves shall have this fellowship directly. In no way, however, is it mediated." K. Bernhard Ritter<sup>24</sup> is clearest on this point. He interprets history as a kind of basic pattern for the Christian religious service. Hence, he powerfully cancels out the fact that the *communio* with the Resurrected One is the climax of the Resurrection narrative.

By so doing he, of course, heightens this climax when he makes everything else a precursor to it, instead of showing that the Word leads to the sacrament. The Lord withdraws in that the *Unio* goes beyond the Word. Nevertheless, it is hinted

that the Holy Supper has its eschatological aspect and that it may not be separated from the Word. Otherwise a wrong cultic concept of the reality of the Resurrection would emerge.

In these discussions we should not forget that the pericopic texts have no theme in the genuine sense. They merely invite us to look in this or that direction and show the presence of the Resurrected One from different sides. When the breaking of bread is discussed, it is first of all always understood as the presence in the Word, and we are invited to the presence in the sacrament.

An inquiry should now be launched that would investigate the sermons on the individual Resurrection texts according to our viewpoints and that would, in particular, go as far as making a linguistic analysis.

Summing up all our considerations on the Easter sermon, we are bound to establish the following:

1. In our understanding of the attestations to the Resurrection we are on the way to understanding what the Resurrection means for us and our world.
2. In order to fulfill this task we require a much stronger dogmatic meditation on the Resurrection and on the connection between death and resurrection. We have had no dogmatic exposition on this subject since Kunneth's approach, where the Resurrection is described as the new dimension of reality in expressionistic categories, behind which Kunneth himself falls back on orthodox terminology.

3. The task of preaching the Resurrection as a new reality which aims to unfold all the reality of creation need not un-

conditionally be dependent upon the results of exegetes. It is the weakness of the Protestant Church that she is of the opinion that she can proclaim only what she understands. By so doing the Protestant Church is no doubt very close to the problems, but she sometimes conceals thereby the Christ reality.

4. The task of proclaiming the reality of the resurrection of Christ depends not only upon Easter. Rather, just as the resurrection of Christ is celebrated according to the common understanding of the Church on every Lord's day, so can each text of the Holy Scripture be correctly interpreted in terms of, and in relation to, the Resurrection. Thus the query about the preaching of the Resurrection becomes a measure for the preaching of the Church as a whole.

## Notes

1. The matter is "relative" precisely when the facticity is well attested to and certain. The historical event occurs in a definite place, in a definite time. It can be compared with others. It participates in the uniqueness (i.e., occurrence once and for all time) and in the comparability of all earthly events.
2. Hence it is exactly the converse of Bultmann's thesis.
3. *Kerygma und Mythos*, p. 44.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
5. Gerhard Ebeling, *Das Wesen. des christliche glaubens*, p. 77.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
7. Gerhard Ebeling, *Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus und der Problem der Christologie*, 1959, p. 29.
8. Karl Barth, *Fürchte dich nicht! Predigtem aus dem Jahre 1934–1948*, 1949, pp. 110–118.
9. Example in Bruno Dreher, *Die Osterpredigt von der Reformationszeit bis zur Gegenwart*, 1951.
10. Geyer and Rittelmeyer, *Leben aus Gott*, 1911, p. 234.
11. Julius Burgraf, *Goethepredigtem*, 1913.
12. Karl Barth, *Fürchte dich nicht*, 1949, pp. 112–113.
13. Cf. Karl Barth, *The Foreword to the Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed. 1921, p. ix.
14. Claus Westermann, *Rundfunk Predigt* (manuscript).
15. Friedrich Gogarten, *Der Schatz in irdenen Gefäßen*, 1960, pp. 191–196 (sermon on John 14.19–20, "Oesterglaube").
16. Adolf Sommerauer, *Experimente mit Gott*, 1959, pp. 82ff. (Luke 24.13–32).

17. Paul Tillich, *Im der Tiefe ist Warheit: Religiöse Redem*, 1952, pp. 181-185.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
19. Wilhelm Hahn, *Auferstehung und Gewissheit*.
20. See Goetz Herbsmeier's review of his book in *Dass wir die Predigt und sein Wort nicht verachten*, 1958, pp. 124-145.
21. Günter Jacob, *Heute, so ihr seine Stimme höret*, pp. 108ff.
22. Wolfgang Trillhaas, *Von dem Geheimnissen Gottes*, pp. 39ff. The scene of the breaking of the bread plays a remarkably small role in Hans Lilse's meditation on Luke 24 "Wanderer auf dem Weg," 1944-1945.
23. Rudolf Bösinger, *Um die Mitte des Jahrhunderts gepredigt*, p. 148.
24. Karl Bernhard Ritter, *Liturgie als Lebenstrom der Kirche*, 2nd ed., 1949, p. 18.